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THE NEW REPUBLIC

GOD BLESS ATHEISM

Leon Wieseltier on the Pledge of Allegiance
Alan Wolfe on Unbelief in America

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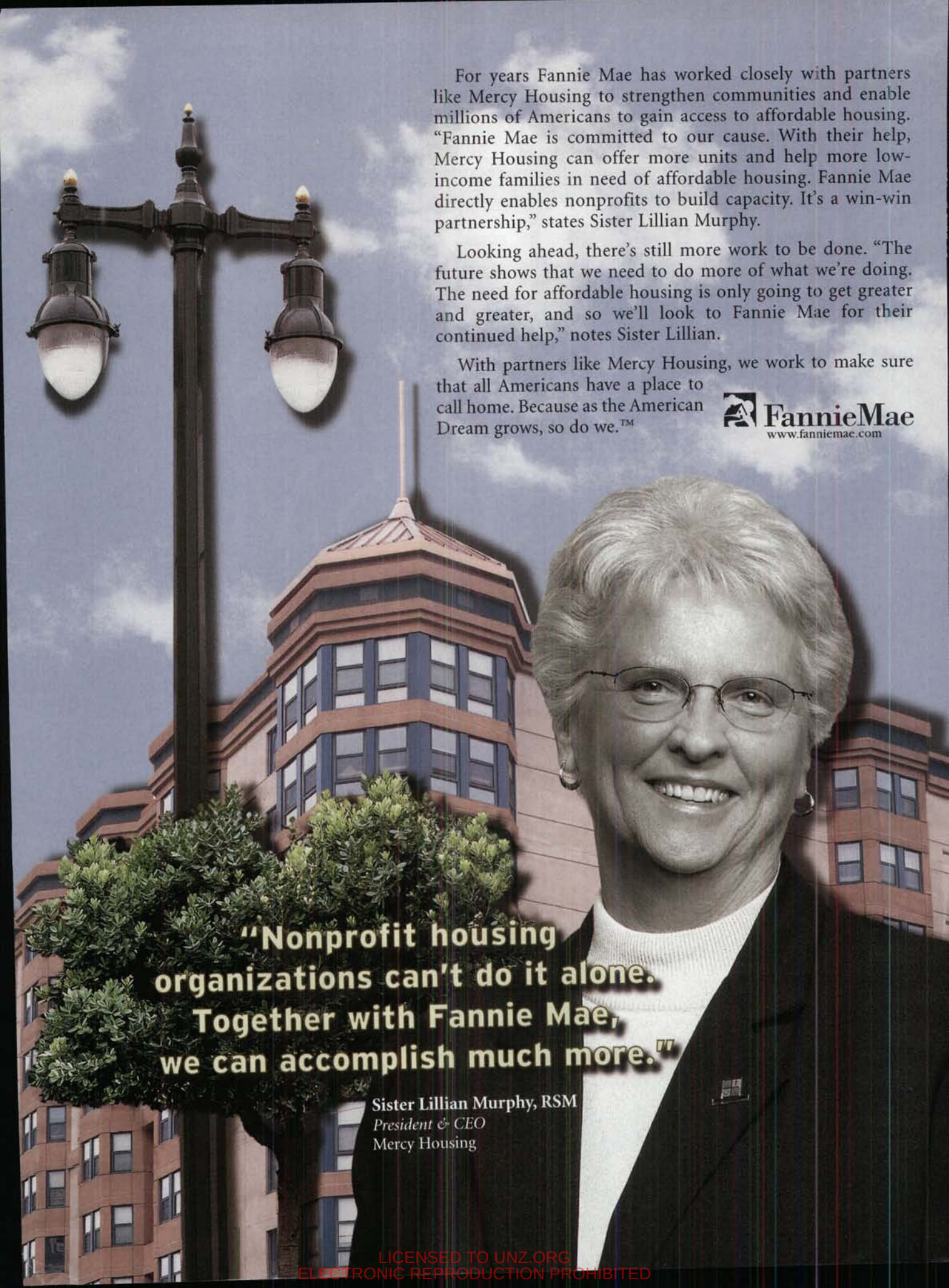
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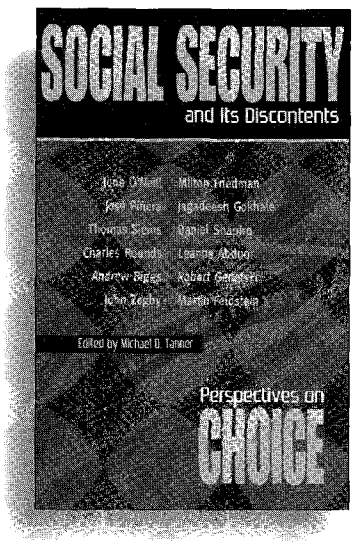

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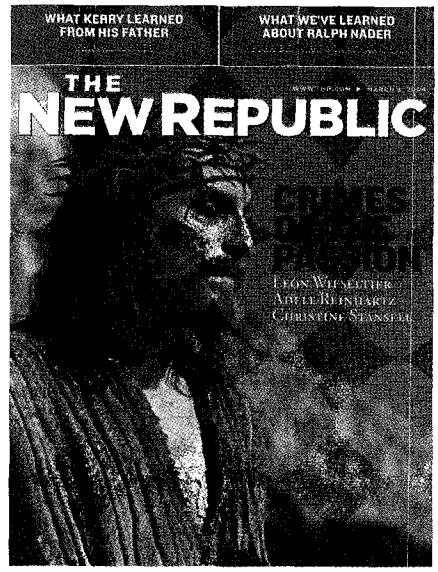
PASSION FRUIT

WHILE I HAVE NO DESIRE TO vindicate Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, I do think Leon Wieseltier's interpretation and critique miss the mark ("The Worship of Blood," March 8). Wieseltier must have a bizarre conception of anti-Semitism to label as anti-Semitic a movie in which the hero, Jesus, and the heroine, Mary, are both Jews. Are we to believe that in any internecine Jewish dispute one party must be anti-Semitic? Rather, the conflict in the movie is not between Jews and Jew-hating gentiles; it is between establishment Judaism and a radical Jew. (Wieseltier will, of course, recall that first-century Judaism was a variegated movement.) Perhaps Wieseltier's violent reaction to Gibson's film stems not so much from *The Passion of the Christ*'s anti-Semitism as from its anti-establishmentarianism.

J. H. GEHOLZ
St. Louis, Missouri

WIESELTIER CONCLUDES THAT Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is anti-Semitic because many Jews—the angry crowds and Sanhedrin—are shown in a bad light. This, I suggest, is unfair. Jesus himself was a Jew. His apostles, like nearly all of his followers at his death, were Jews. Rather than fixate on the ethnicity of those responsible for Jesus' death, most Christians categorize them by their moral failings. Thus, the mobs were those who capitulated to peer pressure and the frenzy of the moment. Pontius Pilate sacrificed truth for safety. Caiaphas protected his authority by destroying an adversary. Judas betrayed Jesus to further his own cause. Peter denied his friendship with Jesus to avoid danger. In these very human reactions, we see the real message of Jesus' death. All of us who err today as these men did 2,000 years ago are culpable. The fact that Jesus of Nazareth lived in a predominately Jewish world and that his enemies and supporters alike were Jews, while historically accurate, is really quite irrelevant. That some viewers, like their medieval predecessors, might choose to find the Jews of today culpable for these events of the first century is terrible. We cannot, however, allow the ignorance of the few to control what we see and hear.



WILLIAM COLE
Vienna, Virginia

BRAVO TO LEON WIESELTIER. Wieseltier's essay is a beautifully crafted observation of what is simply another bloody, overdone Hollywood "slash-and-gash" flick, with the primary motivation being profit. It is

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the height of blind presumptuous dogma—and most likely hype—for Gibson to proclaim that *The Passion of the Christ* is "accurate," and it is insidiously hypocritical to deny its anti-Semitic message.

In honesty, I have not seen *The Passion of the Christ*, and I will not see it. I truly have no desire to watch two hours of excessive cruelty and torture portrayed in all its cinematic splendor. Moreover, as an atheist, the passion message only drives home that the Christian story is just that—a story, albeit a rather illogical one.

CAROLE FRAZIER-RHODUS
Clever, Missouri

RACE BAITING

As a loyal Democrat and student of third-party politics, it was with great interest that I read Jonathan Chait's revealing history of Ralph Nader ("Make You Ralph," March 8). But I must point to a serious error about Nader's intentions in the 2000 election: Nader did not purposely rob Al Gore of the presidency. While I have little doubt that Gore would have won had Nader not been in the race, there is no evidence that he "actively sought to help Bush." My analysis of Nader's campaign-stops and advertising in the fall 2000 campaign demonstrates that he was in fact trying to maximize his own vote total. There is no evidence in my data that Nader targeted battleground states. It is ironic, and sad, that he failed to reach his goal of 5 percent but accidentally succeeded in electing George W. Bush.

BARRY C. BURDEN
Associate Professor of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

JONATHAN CHAIT REPLIES:
Barry C. Burden's analysis, while well-intentioned, fails to account for actions taken by Ralph Nader that harmed his own vote total while hurting Al Gore. For instance, Nader dismissed vote-swapping, which would have allowed his supporters in swing states to trade their votes with Gore supporters in uncontested states. And Justin Martin's 2002 biography reports that the Nader campaign debated in the final days whether to campaign in uncontested states (which, because voters wouldn't fear helping Bush, offered the richest vein of potential Nader votes) or in swing states. Nader decided to focus on the swing states.

IMPLANT

The New Republic's article "Uncivil Military" reports, "After reopening a war-idled cement plant, [Major General David] Petraeus told members of Congress that it would have cost $15 million if the job had been assigned to U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID] contractor Bechtel; Iraqi contractors, he said, had restored production for just $80,000" (Joshua Hammer, March 1).

For the record, Bechtel did not provide any estimate, did not make a proposal, and is not involved in any way with the cement plant referenced in the story. In fact, we have no information on any plans to rebuild such a plant. We hope, in the interest of accuracy, that you will set the record straight with a clarification.

Additionally, a key Bechtel and USAID goal under the Iraq Infrastructure Reconstruction Program is to maximize Iraqi participation in our work. Information on Bechtel's specific outreach efforts can be found on our website at: *www.bechtel.com/sample_iraq_supplier_information.htm*.

MICHAEL G. KIDDER
Manager of Public Affairs
Bechtel National, Inc.
San Francisco, California

JOSHUA HAMMER REPLIES:
I apologize that I, and several other reporters, slightly misreported this element of the story. What Major General David Petraeus actually said was that United States Army engineers had visited the site and estimated that the rehabilitation would have cost anywhere between $15 million and $23 million. Instead, Petraeus turned the job over to local Iraqis, who did it for $80,000.

It doesn't appear that Petraeus named Bechtel directly in his comments. In fact, it was Representative Henry Waxman, in a congressional hearing, who made the connection to Halliburton and Bechtel, the two main contractors for USAID and the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. My apologies for the error. ■

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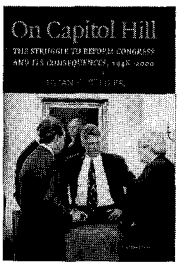

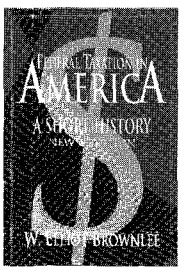

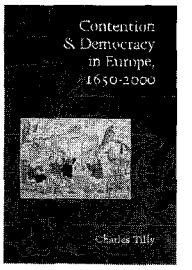

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State of Mind

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

WE SOMETIMES ASSUME September 11, 2001, inaugurated a brand new foreign policy debate. If we see any precedents at all, we find them in the cold war, the last time the United States faced a mortal threat and national security defined the two parties. The 1990s, by contrast, seem like a lull between two storms, an interlude whose relatively trivial foreign policy concerns were rendered obsolete when the World Trade Center fell.

But this isn't really true. In the '90s, both parties crafted visions of the world that September 11 ratified. In many ways, Democrats and Republicans are engaged in the same debate today as they were a decade ago. All that has changed are the stakes.

When the cold war ended, some Republicans decided the United States should turn inward. But isolationism, while prevalent at the GOP grassroots, never captured the party leadership. Pat Buchanan challenged George H.W. Bush in 1992 and Bob Dole in 1996, but control of the party remained in the hands of relative internationalists like Dole, Newt Gingrich, Trent Lott, and, ultimately, George W. Bush. These men believed the job of U.S. foreign policy was to figure out which states would threaten the United States in the future and to head them off—a job from which Bill Clinton's humanitarian adventures distracted. Sometimes GOP leaders imagined China as the new threat; sometimes they imagined "rogue" states like Iran, Iraq, Syria, and North Korea. In either case, the cold war was the template—America's relationship with hostile regimes would define the new era.

As a result, when Islamic terrorists began striking the United States in the '90s, Republicans talked about them not as an independent force, but as the outgrowth of hostile regimes. "Terrorist states have made a comeback during Bill Clinton's administration," claimed the 1996 GOP platform. In January 2000, when Condoleezza Rice outlined the Bush campaign's international agenda for *Foreign Affairs*, she mentioned "the threat of rogue regimes and hostile powers, which is increasingly taking the forms of the potential for terrorism." In *Against All Enemies*, Richard Clarke recounts telling Rice and her deputy, Steve Hadley, that his anti-terrorism office dealt with "post–Cold War security, not focused just on nation-state threats." It was a portfolio, he remembers, that they seemed to consider "strange."

In the Democratic Party, however, the '90s brought a different perspective. If "the economy, stupid" began as a statement about domestic policy, it gradually became a prism for international affairs. Clinton identified globalization—the increased economic, technological, and cultural integration of the world—as his administration's central challenge. And, as he knew from his struggles to please the international bond market, globalization made governments weaker than ever before.

When terrorism hit the United States in the '90s, it became the foremost example of globalization's "dark side." In a 1999 interview with *The New York Times*, Clinton argued that terrorism was a threat not only distinct from rogue states, but greater than them. In the Democratic rejoinder to Rice, in the March 2000 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, former Clinton officials W. Bowman Cutter, Joan Spero, and Laura D'Andrea Tyson argued that "traditional security threats" were giving way to "nonterritorial" problems "like international terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and environmental degradation." For his part, John Kerry in 1997 authored *The New War*, in which he argued the United States should "lead the world in the fight against 'private' criminal enterprises just as we led the world in the fight against 'public' criminal governments."

By September 11, in other words, both parties had already assimilated terrorism into a broader view of the world. Two weeks after the attacks, conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer wrote that "the overriding aim of the war on terrorism is changing regimes." In his first post–September 11 State of the Union, in a clear echo of Ronald Reagan's reference to the "evil empire," Bush spoke of an "axis of evil" comprising Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.

Democrats saw things differently. They supported the war in Afghanistan. But they considered it a war against a terrorist organization that had hijacked a state, not against a government using terrorism as a means of state power. And, in their broader statements, party leaders made it clear they still regarded terrorism as largely independent of governments, not the expression of them—which predisposed them to see Iraq as a diversion. As Kerry put it in February, "The agents of terrorism work and lurk in the shadows of sixty nations."

Republicans say the difference between the two parties is that the GOP wants to wage a war, while Democrats simply want to run police operations. But that's not quite right. Kerry, and many other Democrats, urged the Bush administration to use force *more* aggressively to destroy Al Qaeda remnants in the final days of the Afghan war. The Bush team, by contrast, seemed to grow militarily complacent after the Taliban was overthrown. Relieved that Afghanistan was no longer a rogue state, the Bushies seemed relatively untroubled that it was no longer much of a state at all.

The distinction between the two parties isn't over military force per se; it's over whether to use military force—and every other tool of U.S. power—primarily against terrorist-supporting states or against terrorists operating independently of states. For the GOP, the war on terrorism will be won—in an echo of 1989—by toppling regimes. Not all the regimes will fall to U.S. tanks, but the Iraqi demonstration effect, combined with moral clarity and political pressure, will eventually bring the dominoes down.

I hope they're right. But, even if they are, their model won't win the war on terrorism. As we're learning in Iraq (and, for that matter, in parts of the former Soviet Union like Uzbekistan and Chechnya), toppling dictatorships doesn't necessarily usher in democracy and, thus, doesn't necessarily stop terrorism. Ironically, the more success Republicans have in overthrowing rogue regimes, the more terrorism will become the nongovernmental force Democrats say it is. And the more the United States will have to focus on globalization's "dark side": anarchic states plagued by ethnic conflict, economic dysfunction, loose weapons, and Al Qaeda—in other words, pretty much what we're facing in Iraq. Far from being irrelevant, the '90s are likely to be with us for a very long time. **PETER BEINART**

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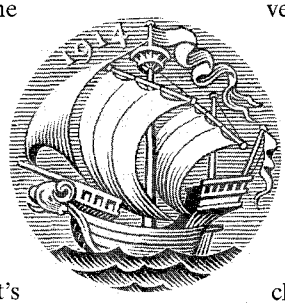
Drug Test

In January 2003, when President Bush announced his ambitious Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief—which called for spending $15 billion over the next five years to put two million people in 14 African and Caribbean countries on lifesaving antiretroviral therapy—the reaction from many on the left was predictably negative. ACT UP Philadelphia's Katie Krauss griped that not enough of the $15 billion would go to the appropriate recipients and warned that "AIDS can only be stopped when the United States contributes adequate amounts to worthy programs regardless of political considerations, ideological goals, or geographical boundaries." Salih Booker of Africa Action questioned the Bush administration's sincerity, declaring, "They have become very good at the soft rhetoric but not the hard policy." Other liberals (including this magazine), by contrast, set their cynicism aside and took Bush at his word. "Inspiring and clearly heartfelt," said Sandra Thurman, who served as the Clinton administration's top AIDS official and now runs the International AIDS Trust, of Bush's announcement. "His plan can save millions of lives."

Alas, some 14 months after Bush announced his AIDS plan, it seems the left's cynicism was warranted. As it has so many times before—whether with the No Child Left Behind Act or the Iraq war—the Bush administration's implementation has betrayed those liberals who gave the president's early rhetoric the benefit of the doubt. The problems with Bush's plan come down to two fundamental issues, the first of which is money. As THE NEW REPUBLIC has noted before (see "Talk Is Cheap," July 21, 2003), initially the Bush administration strongly implied it would spend $3 billion per year over five years to fight AIDS in Africa and the Caribbean. But the White House's 2004 budget request asked Congress for only $2 billion (after some Democrats made a stink, Congress ultimately voted to spend $2.4 billion), and its 2005 budget proposal, now before Congress, calls for only $2.8 billion for its AIDS plan. The administration responds that it is merely "ramping up" the funding for its AIDS program and that, beginning with the 2006 budget, it will spend more than $3 billion per year. But, with budgetary pressures sure to increase in the next few years and with Bush having already pocketed the political capital he received from his AIDS proposal, it's dubious the full funding will ever come.



Second, there is the matter of generic drugs. Shortly after the president's announcement, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a chief architect of the AIDS plan, told reporters that the administration would recommend that the 14 nations receiving money under the plan use some of those funds to purchase generic AIDS drugs manufactured by the Indian company Cipla, which can be one-third the price of brand-name drugs manufactured in the United States. This constituted a serious policy reversal, since only two months earlier the administration had lobbied the World Trade Organization—at the behest of the U.S. pharmaceutical industry, many believed—to confine generic knockoff drugs to domestic markets.

But, in March, the administration informed the first organizations to receive money from its AIDS plan that they could not spend the funds on foreign-made generic drugs until those drugs undergo further evaluation—even though they have been tested and approved by the World Health Organization, which uses the same principles as the Food and Drug Administration. In the meantime, these groups must buy the much more costly U.S.-made, name-brand drugs. Which means that many AIDS patients in the developing world will have to wait longer to initiate antiretroviral therapy—until either the Bush administration approves the use of generic drugs or it allocates more money so these patients can afford the pricier brand-name ones. As the University of California–San Francisco's Dr. David Bangsberg recently told National Public Radio, "The choice is between generic therapy and no therapy."

All of which has led some liberal critics of Bush's AIDS plan to conclude that the administration devised the plan—which is being run by former Eli Lilly CEO Randall Tobias—purely as a gift to U.S. drug companies. "They are trying to hand the U.S. global AIDS plan over to Big Pharma," Health GAP's Sharonann Lynch recently complained to *The Washington Post*. Once, we'd have said that charge was ridiculous. No longer. ■

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NOTEBOOK

Oh Condi, You Came And You Gave Us Some Faking

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...

Now that President Bush has decided to let national security adviser Condoleezza Rice testify in public and under oath before the 9/11 Commission, the political pressure his administration has felt following the allegations of Richard Clarke—the former counterterrorism chief who accused the White House of ignoring the threat from Al Qaeda before September 11, 2001—may temporarily abate. But that relief will likely be short-lived. In trying to wriggle away from Clarke's charges, Rice has made increasingly contorted arguments that contradict available evidence, and, when she eventually puts her hand on the Bible, she'll have a lot of explaining to do.

Take her eyelash-batting insistence to CBS's Ed Bradley that she "would like very much to know what more could have been done" to destroy Al Qaeda in the first months of the Bush administration. That reprised a claim she made in a March 22 *Washington Post* op-ed that "no Al Qaeda plan was turned over to the new administration." Unfortunately, that's simply not true. As the 9/11 Commission staff reported last week, on January 25, 2001, Clarke "forwarded his December 2000 strategy paper and a copy of his 1998 [anti–Al Qaeda] plan to the new national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice." The 9/11 Commission describes Clarke's plan as a "proposed agenda for urgent action" and details its concrete steps to destroy the terrorist network, such as aiding the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance guerrillas, retaliating for the bombing of the USS *Cole*, and using the Predator drone for surveillance missions in Afghanistan that spring, in advance of deploying a missile-equipped version of the aircraft. None of these steps were taken in whole or in part before September 11.

Rice's misleading statements don't stop there. In her op-ed, she contended that in 2001 the administration was

Condoleezza Rice

crafting a more "comprehensive" strategy to eliminate Al Qaeda than Clarke's "insufficient" suggestions. But the 9/11 Commission notes that Clarke—who, as counterterrorism director, was tasked with coming up with the "new" strategy—considered the policy delivered for Bush's signature just before the attacks "essentially similar" to what he had handed Rice that January. Rice maintains that the eventual Bush strategy, known as NSPD-9, "marshaled all elements of national power" and "called for military options to attack Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership, ... taking the fight to the enemy where he lived," suggesting the use of *U.S.* military forces. This appears not to be true. While NSPD-9 remains classified, 9/11 Commissioners Jamie Gorelick and Bob Kerrey described it last week. At its most aggressive, Gorelick said, the plan called for "ways to oust the Taliban based upon individuals on the ground other than ourselves"—i.e., using the Northern Alliance, as Clarke had proposed in January 2001. When Gorelick asked Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage if using our own military was part of the strategy, as Rice wrote, he responded, "No, I think that was amended after the horror of 9/11." It appears Rice may have some amending of her own to do.

DONOR FATIGUE

We wouldn't keep pointing out that the only possible practical impact of Ralph Nader's candidacy will be to help reelect George W. Bush if he didn't keep denying it, arguing that his campaign will draw more disaffected Republicans than Democrats. Interestingly, Nader does appear to be attracting some Republican donors. Wayne Slater of *The Dallas Morning News* has found that nearly 10 percent of those who have given Nader's campaign $250 or more are otherwise exclusively Republican givers. For instance, frozen-food magnate Jeno Paulicci, who has given more than $150,000 to Republicans, gave $2,000 to Nader. Comedian Ben Stein, a GOP donor who has penned conservative screeds for *The American Spectator* and offered to help make TV ads for Bush four years ago, chipped in $500. Only problem is that the Republican Nader donors reached by the *News* won't actually be Nader voters—they all said they wanted to see Bush reelected. So why are they giving Nader money? Hmmmm, let's think.

CHILDHOOD INNOCENCE

Many people know the story of Husam Abdu, the mildly retarded Palestinian boy from Nablus sent by the Tanzim (one of Yasir Arafat's terrorism squads) with an explosive belt under his sweater to kill Israelis and himself at the local checkpoint. From afar, a soldier suspected the child was wired up and, with the help of a robot, disarmed him. Abdu looked like he was

David Cowles

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ten or eleven. He is actually 16. His family was furious that he'd been pressured into the suicidal deed, lured by $20 and the promise of 72 virgins in paradise. Abdu's uncle said, "Those who did this are criminals. ... He was an innocent and quiet boy." Abdu's mother, Tamam, complained about "those who gave him the explosive belt. ... He's a small boy who can't even look after himself." Alas, this dismay was not a function of her son's murderous mission—simply of his age: "If he was over eighteen, ... I might have even encouraged him to do it." A leader of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, trying to deny his group's involvement, insisted that he dispatched only people over the age of 17 to be martyrs. How principled.

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS

In Michael Crowley's "Playing Defense" (March 15), certain statements were mistakenly attributed to Michael Knowles, an employee of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and president of Local 1924 of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). They were actually made by Charles W. Showalter III, vice president at large of AFGE's National Immigration & Naturalization Service Council. We apologize for the error.

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS II

Based on an inaccurate report from the History News Network and an independent eyewitness account, Sean Wilentz's essay "The Details of Greatness" (March 29) reported that, at the most recent American Historical Association meetings, the historian Joseph Ellis described Thomas Jefferson as "the deadest white male in American history." This was incorrect. Ellis was referring ironically to George Washington. He called Jefferson "duplicitous" and a "hypocrite," and he recalled Washington's judgment that these qualities made Jefferson "dangerous." Wilentz and the editors regret the error. ■

TNR.commentary

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GREGG EASTERBROOK

PHONY INDIGNATION: During last week's 9/11 Commission hearings, two important points—overlooked in the coverage—came from former Defense Secretary William Cohen, a Republican who worked for a Democrat. First, Cohen noted, for all the 20-20 hindsight now being focused on Al Qaeda, when Bill Clinton actually tried to do something about Osama bin Laden's organization in 1998—attacking its camps in Afghanistan with cruise missiles—there was general anger. Liberal commentators wrung their hands about attacking a neutral country, and conservatives said Clinton was engaged in a "wag-the-dog" exercise to distract from the Monica Lewinsky scandal—the movie of that name having come out at about the same time. Set aside that the strike was a military letdown. What should be remembered is that, when a president took action against the worst terrorism threat to the Western world, he was condemned—in some cases by those who now say President Bush wasn't aggressive enough before September 11, 2001.

Second, Cohen noted that, when the United States launched an air assault on Iraqi weapons facilities and Republican Guard positions in 1998, after Saddam Hussein stopped cooperating with U.N. inspectors, there was fury. Liberals objected, but the worst criticism came from the right, which, again, charged that Clinton was inventing a war—this time to distract public attention from the impeachment hearings. Many of the same Republicans and conservatives who now argue that the threat Saddam posed was so great as to warrant our invasion of Iraq, at the time depicted air strikes as a mere exercise in political distraction. Recounts Cohen, "I got a call the day that that operation was launched. I received a call from Speaker [Newt] Gingrich and soon-to-be or then-to-be Speaker [Robert] Livingston asking me to come up to Capitol Hill. They said the House was in an uproar. There was a rage boiling in the House of Representatives. [The attack] clearly had to be politically inspired." We now know that the bombing was effective, apparently destroying Saddam's remaining efforts to build weapons of mass destruction. According to Bush's former chief weapons inspector, David Kay, Iraq's banned-weapons programs were pretty much kaput after 1998.

So, as you listen to the outpouring of hindsight surrounding the 9/11 Commission, just remember who was saying what when.

Campaign Journal

RYAN LIZZA

FLIGHT ON TERRORISM: Watching the White House take incoming from former Bush administration counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke over the last two weeks, some pundits have joked that John Kerry's best strategy may be to just stay on vacation or schedule more surgery. But two polls released March 29, one by Pew and one by Gallup, show that Bush's recent advertising blitz has had a far greater effect on the electorate than Clarke's criticisms. While Clarke's charge that the White House ignored the threat from Al Qaeda before September 11, 2001, has dented Bush's approval ratings on terrorism, Kerry's have not improved in turn, and, more important, Bush has eaten away at Kerry's approval ratings on every other topic of concern to voters.

In the Pew poll, Bush's ratings on terrorism dropped four points, but there is no significant net change since Kerry himself dropped three points on the issue. On the other issues tested, the poll shows Kerry dropping and Bush gaining or remaining steady since Pew's survey in mid-March. Kerry dropped eight points on handling the situation in Iraq; seven points on foreign policy; nine points on trade, the economy, and education; eleven points on health care; and twelve points on the job situation.

The Gallup poll shows that Bush's arguments about Kerry are having dramatic results. Here's *USA Today*'s summary: "TV ads are powerful. A majority [of respondents] echo the Bush ads' themes about the Massachusetts senator: 57% say Kerry has changed positions for political reasons, and 58% say their federal taxes will go up if he's elected. And the percentage who say he's 'too liberal' has jumped from 29% in February to 41% now."

There is one danger sign for Bush in the Pew poll. Not all voters are created equal, and the all-important swing voters seem to be losing confidence in Bush's ability to rout Al Qaeda. Whereas, two weeks ago, 72 percent said they thought Bush could do a better job than Kerry fighting terrorism, now only half say that. To be sure, the defectors are not saying Kerry could do better—just that they're now undecided. But this is good news for Kerry. After all, he doesn't have to convince all of these voters that he's stronger on terrorism than Bush, he just has to neutralize the issue, allowing him to run on issues where he's got an advantage.

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Ruhengeri Dispatch

State of Denial

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

THE RWANDAN DEMOBILIZATION and Reintegration Center sprawls across a lush plateau near the northern town of Ruhengeri, just beneath the precipitous slopes of the 14,800-foot Mount Karisimbi volcano. With students playing pickup games of soccer and striding purposefully to class, it could be the tidy campus of a polytechnic academy. Yet it is here where some of the most hardened foot soldiers of the genocidal former Hutu regime—former members of the Rwandan Armed Forces and a handful of Hutu militiamen known as *interahamwe*—are being reeducated and reintroduced to Rwandan society after a decade in exile. "These men fought as mercenaries in the jungles of Africa for eight or nine years," Sam Barigye, a 29-year-old Tutsi who helps run the program, told me as we strolled across the grounds. "They've been brainwashed. They have been isolated. We are trying to tell them what really happened in this country."

For a decade, many participants in, and eyewitnesses of, Rwanda's genocide have remained in deep denial. Now, as the tenth anniversary of the mass killing approaches, the Rwandan government is stepping up its campaign to compel its citizens to confront the truth about one of the twentieth century's greatest crimes. A genocide memorial and museum in the capital, Kigali, is set to open on April 6, the day President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane was shot down in 1994—the event that initiated 100 days of killing, during which nearly one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu perished. Smaller memorials have been created throughout the country in churches, schools, and other massacre sites, where local people are encouraged to gaze upon the remains of Tutsi slaughtered by soldiers and *interahamwe*. As part of its efforts to speed up the justice process and foster a sense of accountability, Rwanda has encouraged more than 80,000 Hutu suspected killers languishing in overcrowded jails to confess their misdeeds in exchange for provisional release. About 23,000 have done so. The prisoners' cases are turned over to *gacacas*, village courts administered by a panel of elected local judges. (Lara Santoro offered an earlier analysis of the *gacaca* courts in THE NEW REPUBLIC. See "Ghost Story," November 11, 2002.) Here, Hutu villagers—whose attendance is compulsory—sit side by side with Tutsi survivors, reliving those horrific 100 days through the testimony of witnesses and murderers.

Joshua Hammer, Jerusalem bureau chief for NEWSWEEK, *covered the Rwandan genocide for the magazine in 1994.*

It's a worthy effort, but it isn't working. After a decade of self-delusion and historical amnesia, most Rwandan Hutu still insist that no genocide took place. Most still subscribe to the version proffered by the former extremist regime that deluged its citizens with propaganda: that Hutu and Tutsi were killed in equal numbers in a civil war sparked by the assassination of the president by Tutsi rebels. Though Rwandan President Paul Kagame has angrily denied the allegation, that version of history resurfaced last month with a leaked French magistrate's report blaming Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Front, then the Tutsi rebel force, for firing the rocket that brought down the presidential plane in 1994.

THE REHABILITATION CENTER in Ruhengeri typifies the obstacles facing the government in its awareness campaign. From eight o'clock in the morning until five at night, several hundred former soldiers and other returned Hutu exiles shuttle between classrooms, where staff instructors and guest experts tutor them on subjects ranging from malaria prevention to the root causes of the genocide. The men sit quietly on hard wooden benches, listening to talk about the *akazu*—the extremist circle that surrounded President Habyarimana—the incendiary role played by the Hutu station Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines, and the current Arusha, Tanzania, war-crimes tribunal. Then they are encouraged to participate in group discussions. "The ex-fighters never ask questions," Barigye told me with frustration. "They just sit there silently, refusing to talk about the genocide."

Barigye introduced me to Jean-Pierre Habyarimana (no relation to the assassinated president), who said that in 1994 he had been a "government functionary" in Cyangugu, near the border of Zaire. Habyarimana fled across the border during the July 1994 exodus and joined a Hutu guerrilla army. He spent another decade as a mercenary in a succession of African bush wars—including a six-month stint with Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, or UNITA, rebels in Angola—before turning in his Kalashnikov and 25 bullets to a U.N. disarmament team in Goma last February. "I was tired of being a refugee, of living in forests," said Habyarimana, a slight, mustachioed 35-year-old with a scar running down his right cheek. "I wasn't afraid. My relatives and other soldiers told me that peace has come to Rwanda."

When I met him in March, Habyarimana was near the end of his 60-day reintegration course, preparing to return to Cyangugu. Yet he didn't appear to have absorbed much from his classes. Habyarimana admitted that "I saw the massacres" in Cyangugu in 1994, but, he stressed, "there were massacres on both sides. Both sides were guilty." Amuri Ndhuri, a 54-year-old veteran soldier who defended Kigali against the rebels in 1994, assured me that Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front bore the primary responsibility for the killings. "They attacked Rwanda; the country was menaced," he told me. "The Rwandan army were just fight-

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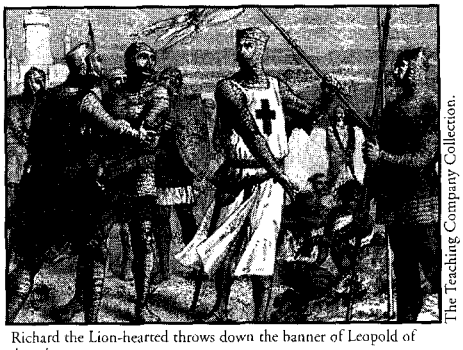

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ing back." Of the five men I talked to, only Ernest Twahirwa, a self-described student who lived near Cyangugu in 1994, used the word "genocide" to describe the events of that year. He told me he had remained in exile for ten years, fearing Tutsi retribution, "because we killed so many of them."

The *gacaca* courts springing up across Rwanda have also fallen short of expectations. After initially playing to empty seats, the government has made attendance at the weekly village courts compulsory, guaranteeing standing-room-only crowds. But that hasn't made the Hutu population any more willing to confront the recent past. I visited a *gacaca* in the hillside Kigali neighborhood of Kigarama, where at least two-thirds of the Tutsi were exterminated in 1994. Under a broiling midday sun, 300 people crowded beneath a blue U.N. tarpaulin strung up over a framework of branches. A panel of 19 judges—none with legal training—called as its first witness Leonides Twahirwa, who had just been provisionally released from prison in Kigali for "admitting" his role in the genocide. Twahirwa—a gangly, shabbily dressed 60-year-old—faced the crowd, his back to his interrogators, and shifted on the balls of his feet as he dodged questions. Hadn't his son been a leader of the *interahamwe*? Twahirwa admitted as much but said he wasn't responsible for his son and never saw him during the genocide. Hadn't Twahirwa participated in neighborhood "security" meetings in which lists of Tutsi targets were drawn up? Well, only two, and he didn't remember who else was there.

Next up was a Hutu woman accused of having intimidated a witness by grabbing her after the last court session and demanding, "How long will you keep trying to put people in jail?" The woman, a lean, kerchief-wearing crone, called her accuser a liar and insisted that she had left the last meeting without talking to anyone. The judges threatened to throw both her and Twahirwa in jail unless they came clean. Francois Bizimana, president of the court, told me that the court was still slogging through the first phase—information-gathering—and didn't expect to start prosecutions for another year. The prisoners provisionally released by the government were proving to be less than cooperative witnesses. "Most of those released confessed to minor charges—stealing cattle, breaking into a Tutsi's house—but not to being involved in the genocide," Bizimana told me.

MEANWHILE, EVEN AS the *gacaca* process proves disappointing, Kagame's authoritarian behavior has slowed reconciliation. Kagame's regime has harassed, jailed, and possibly murdered Hutu who oppose the government, and impeded the war-crimes tribunal in Arusha from investigating the revenge killings of Hutu by Tutsi soldiers. The U.S. State Department now calls Rwanda's human rights record "poor"—a significant statement, given that Rwanda has been a solid U.S. ally since Kagame took over. If Kagame had more effectively exposed abuses committed by his Tutsi confreres, all sides might have more readily embraced the *gacaca* process. With Kagame targeting Hutu opponents, Hutu suspicions of the Tutsi-led government remain intense, and their view that the *gacaca* courts are just a means for the Tutsi to enact retribution has become entrenched.

Despite Kagame's shortcomings, and the *gacaca* breakdowns, the reconciliation process has been an eye-opening experience for some Rwandans—though perhaps not the ones for whom it is intended. As the session drew to a close, I met Claire Sabera, whose father, a wealthy builder, was among the first Tutsi to be killed in Kigarama in April 1994. Like almost all survivors, Sabera had remained in hiding throughout the genocide and thus had no inkling of the role played by her Hutu neighbors. Now, she shows up at the hearings every Saturday, listening in fascination and disgust as details trickle out about the actions of individuals she thought she knew well. "You've been eating, talking, and living with these people for the last ten years," she told me as we stood before the charred ruins of her family's home, burned down by village militiamen on the day that her father was hacked and shot to death. "You say, 'What? My God, how could that be?' Sometimes, I think it would be better if all of this remained buried." So, no doubt, do most of her Hutu neighbors. ■

Everyone failed to fight terrorism.

Both Houses

BY MARTIN PERETZ

TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM IS by now on everybody's tongue and maybe even everybody's mind. But it wasn't so long ago that the threat of terrorism was a preoccupation of the very few, Richard Clarke chief among them. The American foreign and security policy mainstream—the soft-power advocates, the Eurocentric multilateralists, the globalization enthusiasts, and Kofi Annan's dinner partners, the U.N.-firsters—considered him a dangerous crank, an obsessive deserving only ridicule. America's ever-alert, and often hysterical, civil libertarians were alarmed by his ideas for safeguarding the homeland. To make matters worse, he was a consistent ally of Israel in the governments of Bush père and Bill Clinton, both of which shared an identical formula for how to shepherd the peace process: Squeeze the Jewish state to assume additional risk and make yet more unreciprocated concessions. Clarke's job was, in fact, always in peril during the Clinton administration, and its structural sloppiness may be one reason he survived.

Terrorism is an enigmatic, elusive problem. Our inherited models of military conflict do not encompass it, although our enemies in the cold war and, alas, some of our right-wing al-

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lies (for instance, in Nicaragua and Angola) resorted to it, with both sides in these encounters shedding innocent blood with impunity. Yet these ugly eruptions were contained, more or less, within territorially defined theaters of war. The Viet Cong, after all, did not plant bombs in U.S. cities.

The first polity to become acutely conscious of international terrorism was Israel. High-profile, cross-border Palestinian terrorism began at the Munich Olympics in 1972, and the German government—hardly for the last time—allowed the murderers to escape punishment to buy what it hoped would be immunity from other such acts. This was only the beginning—the bare beginning—of dozens of such incidents.

As a consequence, Zionists, and Israel's friends more generally, grasped earlier than others that a new and ugly presence had burst on the world scene. The murder of random civilians, a reversal of the progress made in the rules of war after 1945, seemed primitive. But the terrorism employed by the Palestinian movement relied on quite sophisticated economic and political underpinnings. The Palestinians had the support and assistance of governments—and not just Arab governments—and the help of a wide array of extremist movements: The Palestinians moved vast amounts of cash around, some from the United Nations and Europe, and even some from the United States. They received technical training from a whole variety of states, military matériel and explosives, fake diplomatic immunity, passports, and straightforward ideological support at international jamborees—like the one at Durban, which was pointedly organized by Mary Robinson, then U.N. high commissioner for human rights, now a professor at Columbia University.

The fact that Palestinian terrorism had been deemed modern time's singular—or, at least, only ongoing—species made it seem a parochial concern. But it wasn't. The Red Brigades in Italy, the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany, the IRA, the Basque ETA, the attempted assassination of the pope, not to mention the Tamil Tigers' shocking carnage in Sri Lanka—all these could have been taken as predictors of the future. But few had the stomach to face the truth, and indifference reigned virtually everywhere.

NOT EXCLUDING THE United States. This year's partisanship has obscured the obvious truth behind the current 9/11 Commission hearings: Before September 11, 2001, both the Clinton and Bush administrations were unable or unwilling to mobilize the country against the growing terrorism threat. Neither the first World Trade Center bombing (which the Justice Department treated as a simple case of law enforcement), the enormities at two of our African embassies in 1998, nor the 2000 attack on the USS *Cole* disturbed our stupor. There is a rabbinic commentary about the tale of the walls of Jericho collapsing after Joshua's soldiers marched around them seven times. The first time, the city's inhabitants were frightened. The second, they were mildly disturbed. By the seventh, they couldn't care less and didn't defend the walls at all.

It wasn't as if the Clinton and Bush governments did nothing with regard to the terrorism threat. Under both presidents, Clarke pursued, among other matters, his longtime and highly justified fixation with the threat of cyberterrorism. But neither administration could overcome the ingrained habits of insularity and protectiveness that characterized America's security agencies. That is why every account of September 11 contains hair-raising tales about the FBI, the CIA, the State Department, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). They did not talk to each other, and no one—neither Sandy Berger under President Clinton, nor Condoleezza Rice under President Bush—could knock their heads together. In fact, we have little evidence that the national security advisers even tried. That is why two September 11 terrorists, who were on the terrorism watch list of the CIA, were able to cross frontiers and why Mohammed Atta was able to roam the northeast corridor at will, board a plane in Portland, Maine, and then board the fated craft in Boston. It is also why timely reports from FBI agents in Phoenix and Minneapolis—one with a suspicion about flight schools, the other with suspicions about a single conspirator, Zacarias Moussaoui—were ignored.

One of the few high-level officials who comes off well in Clarke's book is Vice President Al Gore. Twice during the Clinton administration, Gore led attempts to enhance the security of air travel. If the salient suggestions of his two efforts—one a commission focused on airline safety and security, the other his reinventing-government initiative that sought to reform the relevant bureaucracies (including the FAA)—had been put into effect, the United States would have been less vulnerable to Atta and his colleagues. The Gore commission's recommendations—high-tech baggage-screening for explosives and better training for screeners—are now mandatory. But, at the time, they were undercut by airline lobbyists and Republican congressmen. Even more controversial (and potentially valuable) were the commission's recommendations for passenger screening, which, a former Gore aide involved in both studies told me, were killed by Democratic congressmen and the American Civil Liberties Union. Other ideas—for protective devices in cockpits and sky marshals—were shelved by the commission when it became clear they too would be politically impossible. (Even THE NEW REPUBLIC doubted their value.) Some of the Gore recommendations were put into effect within a week after September 11, but not all.

Even worse than the failure to take airline security seriously was the failure to really go after Osama bin Laden. The inhibitions that prevented American forces from trying to kill bin Laden when they had opportunities reflect a paralyzing blindness about the mortal perils posed by terrorism to civil society. This was the triumph of queasy international lawyers over ethical realists. Such rules date back to the Ford administration's interdict, pushed on it by the Church Committee, against assassinations of anyone. Even now, technically, our armed forces

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cannot kill any important terrorist unless they are actually trying to capture him—or pretending to.

Then there is the enticement of diplomacy, a mirage when it comes to Al Qaeda and its sponsors. The Taliban couldn't, or wouldn't, produce bin Laden and neither did the Saudis. Diplomacy never works with apocalyptic partners. Yet the Clinton administration wasted much time chasing after intermediaries, and even the Bush administration appears to have done a bit of the same.

When, after the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, Clinton launched cruise missile strikes against sites in Afghanistan and Sudan, Republicans ridiculed the effort, not so much because the targets were flimsy or the power employed was meager, which they were. Instead, they claimed the attacks were meant to deflect public attention from his public troubles regarding his playmate Monica Lewinsky. This scorn would surely have prevented Clinton from pursuing a real military effort against Al Qaeda, which ran counter to his administration's instincts anyway.

Clarke, by contrast, was possessed by a compulsion about terrorism. Alas, he could not persuade either of the last two administrations for which he worked to share it. David Johnston and Todd S. Purdum in a March 25 article in *The New York Times* describe Clarke as having warned that "Al Qaeda had sleeper cells in many countries, including the United States." Now that the Democrats are so enthusiastic about Clarke and his ideas, let them and their presidential candidate put forward a concrete strategy for uncovering this diffused and malevolent underground. But perhaps John Kerry does not think this necessary. He has accused the Bush administration of having "exaggerat[ed]" the threat of terrorism, a judgment he may yet have to eat. But, then, let the Republicans, who are after all still in power, at least give the American public instructions about what it needs to know and do if and when another disaster strikes. Our ignorance on this matter is no tribute to George W. Bush. The sad fact is that both parties have failed us, and both of the presidents they have put forward in this anxious time have as well. ■

Can Greg Mankiw survive politics?

Out of Depth

BY NOAM SCHEIBER

GREG MANKIW IS a nerd. The current chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), Mankiw is tall and lanky with hunched nerd shoulders. He has a round nerd face, with a big nerd nose and squinty nerd eyes. He does wear sleek, metal-framed glasses. But, as they sit atop a perpetually pinched, nerd expression, the effect is less to mask his overall nerdiness than to draw attention to it. Occasionally, Mankiw lets slip that he, too, considers himself a nerd. Asked about the recent trend in productivity growth at a conference of the National Association for Business Economics (NABE), he begins by observing that most people are bored silly by such discussions. But, he says, surveying the room, "Nerds like this love that kind of stuff."

For those (like myself) who find such earnest dweebiness endearing, Mankiw (pronounced "Man-cue") is a highly sympathetic character. He also happens to be one of the most talented and respected macroeconomists in the world. "Greg is good and honest," Jeffrey Frankel, a former Clinton administration CEA member and a fellow Harvard economist, says succinctly. The combination of the two makes it particularly painful to watch Mankiw operate in an administration that so actively disdains intellectual give-and-take and where political considerations so obviously trump economic ones.

At times, you can practically see the dissonance spelled out on Mankiw's face. He appears to wince when he gets a question from the generally anodyne NABE crowd about the administration's dubious promise to cut the deficit in half in five years. His hurried delivery suggests a man who clearly prefers musing on the finer points of investment spending to reciting administration talking points. "Spending restraint is the big challenge," he mutters half-heartedly, before explaining that the administration plans to achieve its goal through a mixture of spending restraint and entitlement reform. He cites the recent Medicare reform bill as an example. "The easy thing to do would have been to take the existing system and add a prescription-drug benefit on top of it." But, instead, he continues—utterly unconvincingly—the president demanded changes that will save real money over the long term. (This, describing a bill recently estimated to cost $534 billion over ten years.) "So there's—there's a fundamental rethinking" going on, he concludes.

Given such performances, it's not hard to see why Mankiw gets into trouble from time to time. Though the administration's economic agenda has become no more irresponsible in the year or so since Mankiw took over as CEA chair (and possibly less so, since there have been no new budget-busting tax cuts and steel tariffs have been rescinded), the administration increasingly finds itself on the defensive on the economy. In recent weeks, critics have accused it of everything from ignoring the plight of the unemployed to grossly optimistic economic forecasting to Soviet-style historical revisionism about the recent recession. In part, this is due to the heightened scrutiny that inevitably accompanies a presidential campaign. In part, it's due to the continued inability of the economy to produce jobs. But a final factor is a recent series of wounds inflicted by Mankiw—the academic nerd thrust into an unexpectedly political role.

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MANKIW'S POLITICAL ham-handedness is particularly glaring when compared with the bureaucratic savvy of his immediate predecessor, Columbia University economist Glenn Hubbard. Hubbard is, by all accounts, a political animal. He served as a deputy assistant treasury secretary during the first Bush administration and coordinated economic policy for the Bush campaign in 2000. He reportedly lobbied for the job of deputy treasury secretary once George W. Bush won the election but ended up with the CEA post as a consolation prize. The move turned out to be a blessing. Though the CEA has traditionally been thought of as an administration's in-house economic think tank—sizing up the relative merits of various policy options but rarely proposing policy initiatives itself—Hubbard, aided by the bureaucratic ineptitude of then–Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, molded it into a major policy force. Last year's dividend tax cut, for example, was Hubbard's brainchild—one he pushed in part by using his CEA perch to bully Treasury officials into lowballing their estimates of how much it would cost, according to these officials. (Hubbard responds, "I have enormous respect for the [Treasury] staff, but the sort of conversations you mentioned did not happen.") In internal deliberations, as Ron Suskind reports in his recent book, *The Price of Loyalty*, Hubbard also dramatically underplayed the effects that the deficits created by this tax cut would have on interest rates—and, therefore, long-term growth.

Mankiw, by contrast, is hardly what you'd consider a politico. "He is very much rooted in Boston," says Jeffrey Miron, an economics professor at Boston University who knows Mankiw from their grad-school days. Mankiw's only experience in Washington prior to his current job was a brief stint as a CEA staff economist during the early '80s. There he worked under Harvard economist Marty Feldstein, who famously (and publicly) clashed with supply-siders in the Reagan administration over the dangers of running large budget deficits.

Back in Massachusetts, where in 1987 he became Harvard's youngest-ever tenured professor at the age of 29, Mankiw was preoccupied with two things. The first was building a world-class reputation as a macroeconomist. "His academic reputation is indeed first-rate," says columnist (and Princeton economist) Paul Krugman. Then, his academic credentials established, Mankiw set about making himself one of the best-compensated college professors on the planet by writing the gold standard of undergraduate economics textbooks, *Principles of Economics*. The book, widely hailed as the most lucid and engaging of its kind, earned Mankiw an unprecedented $1.4 million advance prior to its publication in 1997. It also offers evidence that Mankiw never harbored aspirations for a top-level political appointment in a GOP administration. On pages 29 and 30 of the

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first edition, Mankiw writes, "An example of fad economics occurred in 1980, when a small group of economists advised presidential candidate Ronald Reagan that an across-the-board cut in income tax rates would raise revenue. ... When politicians rely on the advice of charlatans and cranks, they rarely get the desirable results they anticipate." This, needless to say, did not much endear him to the various supply-siders in and around the second Bush administration.

Still, by the time Hubbard left the administration in February 2003, Mankiw seemed to fit the profile of the White House's ideal CEA chairman. His academic reputation would lend credibility to the administration's economic pronouncements. Meanwhile, his textbook and a several-year stint as a *Fortune* magazine columnist had established him as a gifted explicator of economic ideas. (The latter also marked him as clearly right of center ideologically: Among other topics, his *Fortune* columns advocated Social Security privatization and an elimination of the estate tax.) But perhaps most important was that the White House wanted to replace Hubbard with a CEA chairman who was less of a political operator, in hopes of restoring some of the historical balance between Treasury and CEA. "Greg came into an environment where [the White House] was much more interested in Treasury playing a larger role [and] doing the heavy lifting on tax policy," says one former CEA economist present for the transition. Mankiw would be left to do what CEA chairmen had done for decades: Give objective economic advice.

This is more or less what he has done. "Hubbard ... had a good feel for how the Hill works," says one Republican congressional aide. "I saw him a lot [during the negotiations over the 2003 tax cut]. He was a major player in that." Mankiw, by contrast, remains a virtual unknown in Congress. "I haven't seen him on the Hill at all," says the aide. According to Bob Collender, a former CEA economist who worked under both Mankiw and Hubbard, "When I came in, Glenn had been chairman for a while; Glenn knew what he wanted to accomplish. When Greg came in, he was coming in cold."

BUT GIVING ADVICE behind the scenes is only half of a CEA chairman's job. The other half is making the case publicly for the administration's economic policies—no easy task at a time of historically high deficits and historically low job growth. And it's in this role that Mankiw's lack of political experience has become a liability. Any appointee can make the case for economic policies that are either honest or successful. But making the case for policies that are neither—recall that last year's tax cut was sold as a "jobs and growth" package—requires a skill Mankiw's academic background has not equipped him with.

Mankiw's troubles began in early February, when, while announcing the release of the annual *Economic Report of the President*, he lauded offshore outsourcing as a "good thing" and "just a new way to do international trade." From an academic standpoint, Mankiw was entirely right: Trade in goods is theoretically indistinguishable from trade in labor (i.e., outsourcing), and both increase the amount of output an economy can produce. But, at a time when outsourcing ranks among Americans' chief economic anxieties, the comment was a political disaster, opening the administration to ridicule from Democrats and Republicans alike. House Speaker Dennis Hastert went so far as to issue a press release headlined "HASTERT DISAGREES WITH PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC ADVISOR ON OUTSOURCING," which chided Mankiw for failing "a basic test of real economics."

The outsourcing flap was only the beginning. In a speech in Washington a little over a week later, Mankiw picked up on another theme he'd highlighted in the *Economic Report*: whether fast-food restaurants like McDonald's should be considered part of the manufacturing sector or the service sector. "[W]hen a fast-food restaurant sells a hamburger," he asked in a speech before the National Economists Club, "is it providing a service or combining inputs to manufacture a product?" His point was to suggest that such seemingly academic classification issues have important policy consequences—such as whether or not a particular firm is eligible for a tax cut. But Democrats and late-night comedians quickly lampooned the comments as a suggestion that fast-food jobs might be the solution to the nation's manufacturing crisis. Michigan Representative John Dingell went so far as to write the administration a letter recommending that Mayor McCheese be nominated to fill the still-vacant position of American manufacturing czar.

But, from the perspective of both his personal reputation and the Bush administration's credibility on economic matters, Mankiw's costliest mistakes were buried deeper in the text of the *Economic Report*. The report put the average level of employment in 2003 at about 130.1 million and projected that number would rise to 132.7 million in 2004. On its face, this seemed to suggest that the administration was anticipating 2.6 million new jobs in 2004—which was unlikely given that the economy had only created some 300,000 jobs in the entire second half of last year (itself an improvement from the first half). In fact, the projection was even more ambitious than it appeared. That's because, given the level of employment at which the United States started the year (around 130 million), achieving an *average* of 132.7 million jobs in 2004 would have required adding over four million jobs by the end of the year—a virtual impossibility given the current high rate of productivity growth. (High productivity makes it less necessary to hire more employees.)

The administration backpedaled from Mankiw's obviously unrealistic figure like mad. "I'm not going to get hung up on any particular number," Treasury Secretary John Snow said in response to persistent hectoring from reporters in mid-February. (This was odd, since Snow would have personally approved the particular number in question.) The president also declined to endorse the estimate, saying only that "I think the economy is growing, and I think it's going to get stronger." These developments prompted no small amount of glee from John Kerry. "They don't know what they're talking about in their own economic policy,"

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the presumptive Democratic nominee announced.

At almost the same time, yet another passage in the *Economic Report* was creating yet another controversy, this one over whether the 2001 recession actually began on Bill Clinton's watch. In the *Economic Report*, Mankiw noted that the data used by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) to "date" the start of the recession had been revised backward; he argued that the March 2001 start date should therefore be revised as well, to late 2000. "For these reasons," the *Economic Report* explains, "the analyses throughout this chapter (including the charts that compare this recession to past recessions) use the fourth quarter of 2000 as the peak of economic activity and the start of the recession." The problem, according to Jeffrey Frankel, a member of the NBER's recession-dating committee, was that only a small minority on the NBER committee favored moving the start date back more than a month. The CEA's analysis had ignored the fact that the NBER weights different pieces of data differently—and that the pieces given the most weight in the original decision still supported a 2001 date. Worse, the discussion flouted the precedent of government agencies deferring to the NBER on the matter. Once again, administration officials found themselves facing allegations of political tinkering, forcing White House spokesman Scott McClellan to retreat from the position at a mid-February press conference.

THE IRONY OF these controversies is that, unlike Hubbard, who repeatedly got away with big evasions with important policy implications, Mankiw has run into trouble either for claims that are utterly uncontroversial among economists or for modest fudges that hardly matter at all.

The jobs estimate, for example, actually relied on a very cautious 2004 gross-domestic-product (GDP) forecast of about 4 percent. But it's the latter number that has far more serious policy implications, since it's the most important factor in projecting how much money the administration will have to spend from year to year. Had Mankiw wanted to massage the numbers to benefit the administration, he could have killed two birds with one stone by inflating his estimate of GDP growth to a level consistent with most private forecasts, which would have brought up his jobs number as well. (Instead, the high jobs estimate hinged on a conservative assumption about productivity growth—one far out of line with the experience of the last few years, but not so outrageous given that no one expects that performance to continue.) Moreover, the jobs forecast didn't look nearly as optimistic on December 1, when it was finalized, as it did following the *Economic Report*'s release in February, after three months' worth of lousy job data.

Likewise, to anyone other than a handful of academic economists plugging data into their regressions, the question of whether the recession began in late 2000 or early 2001 is of zero economic or policy significance: No tax revenue depend on it; no spending decisions are based on it. And any suspicion that Mankiw's argument on the recession was politically motivated is allayed by the fact that it is both carefully reasoned and extremely obtrusive—sitting as it does in a box on page 30 of the *Economic Report* with the headline, "WHEN DID THE RECENT RECESSION BEGIN?" If Mankiw had been trying to get away with outright hackery, then he would have been much better served by simply asserting the change in passing. (CEA documents during the Hubbard era tended to rely much more heavily on such assertions.) Instead, "the report reads like academics debating in the coffee room," says Krugman.

Of course, given the administration's history of economic dishonesty—and the fact that Bush officials have spent years trying to sell tax cuts for the wealthy as job-creation programs and making the case that they inherited a recession from Bill Clinton—it was inevitable that Mankiw's assertions would be widely viewed as politically motivated. Which is why, even if he had no bad intentions, Mankiw's story has to be viewed as a cautionary tale for academics considering serving an administration that puts such a low priority on intellectual integrity. If you take a job that makes you look like you're fudging the facts, at the very least, make sure you learn how to do it well. ■

John Kerry: Outsider.

Teen Wasteland

BY FRANKLIN FOER

HIGH SCHOOL REUNIONS are inherently unkind. But, for John Kerry, the fortieth gathering of the St. Paul's class of 1962 was particularly bad. The key episode took place in a Concord, New Hampshire, restaurant, not far from the school itself. Kerry wasn't at the dinner. That, however, didn't prevent him from looming over the evening. Toward the meal's end, the class president, a Boston lawyer named Lloyd Macdonald, rose to give a toast. He wanted to celebrate his classmates who had devoted their careers to public service. As he ticked off the names—FBI Director Robert Mueller; the State Department's top lawyer, Will Taft; federal Judge Alvin A. Schall—the sexagenarians bathed the room in loud applause. But, when Macdonald uttered the name of the junior senator from Massachusetts, the response was somewhat different. According to witnesses, only scattered boos broke the silence.

Kerry didn't leave boarding school a popular man. Forty-two years after the fact, many of his classmates still mock him. They chide him for being a teachers' pet and a selfish hockey player. ("What you need to remember," says Macdonald, "is that John never passed [the puck].") In fact, they dislike him so much that they've frequently helped his

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political opponents. Haven Pell, a St. Paul's graduate and Washington financial adviser who raised cash for William Weld's 1996 race against Kerry, told me, "It was very interesting, the number of the St. Paul's class of 1962 who went out of their way to be supportive of Bill Weld."

High school social status, of course, should be meaningless in a presidential race. But, in at least one way, Kerry's boarding-school years do matter: They contradict the conventional portrait of him. According to most newspaper profiles, Kerry is the ultimate establishmentarian. "Mr. Kerry fit right in with the Northeastern elite," John Tierney wrote last month in *The New York Times*. On paper, this is certainly true. Kerry's middle name is Forbes, as in the Forbes shipping fortune. Winthrop blood ties him to the earliest days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. And, at every stage in life, the establishment has seemingly renewed his membership; first by admitting him to one of its fanciest boarding schools, then by accepting him to Yale, and then again by tapping him to join Skull & Bones.

But, for all these patrician trappings, Kerry has never been fully accepted into the blue-blood world. In fact, during his time at St. Paul's, a cradle of the old WASP aristocracy, Kerry was an outsider: an unwelcome Catholic among high-church Episcopalians; the son of a Foreign Service officer and, thus, a relative poor boy; an earnest liberal among rock-ribbed Republicans. "He felt like he didn't fit," says Kerry's best boarding-school friend, Daniel Barbiero. In response to his estrangement, Kerry followed the pattern set by generations of immigrants. He became an ambitious, hard-working striver—the opposite of the ideal of effortlessly achieving aristocracy. Douglas Brinkley writes in his biography of Kerry, *Tour of Duty*, "Given [the] class-consciousness of St. Paul's School, Kerry felt especially compelled to prove himself." It's this work ethic and craving for approval, shaped by his inability to easily assimilate into the elite, that has come to define Kerry's persona and his candidacy.

ST. PAUL'S IS one of the few places in the United States where a Forbes scion could feel like an outsider. The school was born in 1856, about 70 years after nearby Exeter and Andover academies had begun accepting students. But, because the older schools were founded in revolutionary times, they had cultivated a distinctly American ethos, wrapping themselves in democratic rhetoric. St. Paul's, on the other hand, bore all the marks of Henry James's and Edith Wharton's times. Above all, it had a Jamesian fetish for English aristocracy. Unlike the academies, St. Paul's explicitly affiliated itself with the Episcopal Church. (For many years, the school's catalogue began, "St. Paul's is a church school . . . .") English nomenclature, borrowed directly from Eton and Harrow, penetrated the institution's every cranny. St. Paul's doesn't have "eleventh and twelfth grade"; it has "fifth and sixth form." It is led by a rector, not a headmaster. For a time, as baseball was emerging as the national pastime in the latter half of the nineteenth century, St. Paul's forbid the game, only permitting students to play cricket. In other words, even by the standards of Choate, the Knickerbocker Club, and Porcellian, St. Paul's was a stuffy place.

By the time Kerry arrived at the school in 1958, the old WASP establishment was coming under assault. World War II had given birth to a new spirit of egalitarianism. But that spirit had hardly begun to infiltrate St. Paul's. In his 1961 annual report, the school's rector assured alumni that he hadn't introduced meritocratic admissions standards: "We have not sought to comb the country for the very ablest boys attainable nor have we used scholarship funds to entice the unusually able boys to our school." And it showed. John Kerry's class hardly represented America. It had no Jews—at least, no self-identified Jews—or African Americans. His schoolmates included a descendent of President William Howard Taft, an heir to the Corning glass fortune, and a host of kids with names like Whitney and Pierpont. Barbiero arrived at the school from Far Rockaway, New York. Introducing himself to a classmate, Chad Floyd, he mentioned his Long Island roots: "He said, 'Long Island? I have a relative who has a parkway named after him on Long Island,' which is the William Floyd Parkway. And Phil Heckscher [another new classmate] told me the same. I thought they were both joking. Two guys in a row who say that they have a parkway named after them in Long Island? You've got to be kidding."

Kerry may have had a moneyed pedigree, but he didn't have money. By the time the Forbes family fortune reached his mother, it had been subdivided into an extremely modest sum. (Kerry's mother, Rosemary, who trained to be a nurse, was one of eleven children.) Nor was his father's Foreign Service salary robust enough to foot the school's exorbitant tuition. Kerry attended St. Paul's thanks to the beneficence of his childless great-aunt, Clara Winthrop, who volunteered to cover the costs. "We weren't rich," Kerry's sister Diana told *The Boston Globe* last summer. Or, as Joe Klein put it in *The New Yorker*, Kerry's family belonged to "a threadbare, erstwhile aristocracy."

Under most circumstances, and in most U.S. settings, Kerry's shabby gentility would not have disadvantaged him. But St. Paul's was an extremely status-conscious place. As Brinkley writes in his biography, "At St. Paul's, unless you had a lot of money *and* wore the right clothes *and* had parents who belonged to the right clubs, you could be made to feel inadequate, born on the wrong side of the tracks." Fitting in—to be a "reg," or regular guy, as the St. Paul's kids said—meant having the right pair of loafers, the right Brooks Brothers suit, and the right ring belt. Kerry certainly dressed the preppy part. But there were obvious ways in which he could not keep up. While his classmates summered in Europe (or even took private jets to the Continent for long weekends), Kerry spent his breaks working as a Teamster in Somerville, Massachusetts, for the First National Stores, loading food onto trucks. He frequently borrowed money from friends. And, if his relative poverty weren't apparent enough, Kerry always had richer classmates issuing

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Twisted Words and Phrases (1)

How Arab propaganda has managed to give new meaning to old words.

In the decades of the Arabs' unremitting struggle to fight the Jews to the death and to wipe Israel off the map, they have managed to introduce certain words and phrases into the consciousness of the world. These phrases are twisted and have in many cases come to convey the exact opposite of their actual meaning. Today, we examine two of those twisted concepts.

Terrorists and Freedom Fighters

The Palestinians who blow themselves up and in so doing, succeed in killing and maiming as many innocent Jews as possible are described as "martyrs" and "freedom fighters" in the Arab world and even in much of the European press. But, for whatever purpose, the deliberate murder and mutilation of defenseless and innocent civilians can never be warranted by the common law of humanity and by accepted international standards of behavior and international law, even where the use of insurgent force may be understandable and even justified.

And, surely, there must be great doubt whether the insurgence of the Palestinians is justified at all. They have rejected all offers to settle their conflict and alleged grievances against Israel. The goal of the Palestinians is not to live peacefully and successfully alongside Israel, but rather to build a Muslim-Arab state on the charred ruins of a dismembered Israel.

The official website of the PNA (Palestinian National Authority) does not show two states, only one—Israel is eliminated altogether. Palestinian "insurgents," who resort to terrorism and slaughter of innocent Israeli civilians will never acknowledge that a Jewish state, of any size and wherever located, has any right to exist. They will fight to the death and use any method and any weapon available to them to achieve their extremist and unattainable goals.

Those who murder and maim innocent civilians in pursuit of their genocidal ends are not "martyrs" nor "freedom fighters," nor even "militants" (as even the U.S. press often calls them). They are common mass murderers and terrorists, just as much as those who, for their own twisted reasons, committed the September 11 atrocities, and who deserve the condemnation of all decent mankind.

> "There can really be no peace with people who...encourage their children to blow themselves up in order to kill or to maim as many as possible of those who oppose their twisted ideas of religion and of patriotism."

Dishonor in the Muslim World

The subjugation of women in all Islamic countries is placidly accepted by most of the world. The most widespread of these abominations is that of female genital mutilation, a practice that invades the rights of women and their enjoyment of life in the most horrible way.

Another act of disgraceful repression of women in the Muslim world is the "protection of family honor." Under this concept, a woman who, for any reason at all—including having been raped—is suspected of being or having been involved with a man who is not her husband, is condemned to death, usually by stoning. The primary purpose of that savagery is to salvage what is considered the "family honor."

"Honor killings" claim tens of thousands of female lives every year throughout the Muslim countries of the Middle East and Africa. Nobody seems to care. There is no record that the U. N. or any other international body has done anything to interfere with those horrible practices.

Leave it to the talent for genocidal innovation of Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist organization, to have added a new macabre twist to this barbaric custom. In January, a woman named Ream Selah el-Rayashi blew herself up at the Erez checkpoint, the main passage between Gaza and Israel. The woman, mother of two children, had committed the grave offense of falling in love with a man other than her husband. When the affair was discovered, el-Rayashi was given the choice between a dishonorable death by stoning at the hands of her family or an honorable state of martyrdom by becoming a suicide bomber. She chose self-inflicted death and the murder and maiming of many innocent Jews, before dishonor. It is not surprising that no similar demands were made on el-Rayashi's lover.

There can really be no peace with people whose beliefs are so different from Western concepts. There can be no peace with people who treat their women worse than cattle, kill them to save their "honor," and who mutilate them horribly in order to keep them sexually subjugated. And there can be no peace with people who, in the name of and for the purported glory of God, blow themselves up or encourage their children to blow themselves up in order to kill or to maim as many as possible of those whom they consider their mortal enemies and who oppose their twisted ideas of religion and patriotism.

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reminders of their bigger bank accounts. Barbiero recounted to me a symbolic incident. One of Kerry's poorer classmates had carefully compiled a record collection that was his proudest possession—and everyone in the school knew it. But a rich classmate couldn't stomach the satisfaction felt by Kerry's friend, so he ventured into Concord and bought out the record store. According to Barbiero, Kerry empathized with the collector. "John was upset about this and thought it was a nasty thing to do."

Kerry's lack of wealth wasn't all that separated him from his classmates. As a child, Kerry had been deeply Catholic, serving as an altar boy and toying with joining the priesthood. At St. Paul's, it wasn't easy for Kerry to keep his faith. On Sunday mornings, he would take a taxi into Concord for Mass—and then have to return to attend two mandatory Episcopal services at school. In other words, every week, he was forced to remind his classmates of his religious affiliation. And, given his classmates' attitudes toward Catholicism, Kerry would probably have preferred to keep his faith to himself. When Bobby Kennedy attended St. Paul's in 1939, his mother, Rose, pulled him from the school after only a month because she couldn't stomach its anti-Catholic ethos. While that attitude atrophied somewhat, it hadn't entirely disappeared by the late '50s. Barbiero told me, "There were jokes about Catholics. I had more than one classmate tell me that 'those people' had their own clubs and own societies, and they weren't part of our society."

Even though Barbiero wasn't Catholic himself, many classmates simply assumed he was because of his Italian name. It didn't make for an easy social life. Together, he'd join Kerry in the study of the school's chaplain, where they would commiserate over their shared social exclusion. Kerry responded strongly to his outsider status, compensating for it by working hard and intensely craving success. "He acted like Horatio Alger on the make," writes Brinkley, "believing that the social order should be based on temerity and merit." Like the character Max Fischer in *Rushmore*, he went about St. Paul's founding and joining clubs, from the Concordian Literary Society to the debating team. He created a political union called the John Winant Society, where he would deliver earnest perorations with titles like "The Plight of the Negro." Where most of his colleagues viewed admission to Harvard and Yale as a fait accompli, Kerry stressed over his collegiate future. "He desperately wanted to get into Yale and worked hard to get there," says Barbiero.

Unfortunately for Kerry, his boarding-school comrades regarded ambition as a cardinal sin. His schoolmate Stanley Resor says, "A lot of people resented his ambition." Achievement wasn't frowned upon. But you were supposed to downplay your accomplishments, to make them look effortless. At Yale, during the blue-blood heyday, the attitude was symbolized by varsity athletes, who wore their letter sweaters inside out to de-emphasize their achievement—never mind that the sweaters' interior stitching kept the letters perfectly clear to all observers.

So, instead of winning him respect, Kerry's hard work earned him the derision of his classmates. In fact, St. Paul's created an entire folklore about Kerry, much of it embellished. More than anything, they mocked Kerry for styling himself after John Kennedy, imitating the president's voice and haircut, as well as exploiting his identical initials. "He signed his papers JFK," says Macdonald. According to Pell, Kerry would practice writing his initials on his blue jeans and "just kinda went around telling people that he's going to be president." What irked so much about this comparison? To them, this ambitiousness was selfish and self-indulgent. As they liked to joke, JFK means "Just for Kerry."

These accusations of selfishness trailed Kerry wherever he went, especially in sports. Kerry's enemies contend he was a disaster in the hockey rink and on the soccer pitch—a puck and ball hog who cared more about looking stylish than scoring. Pell says, "You couldn't get that kid to pass the salt. A ball or puck delivered to John Kerry was into a black hole. It never came back again." Most damningly, as Resor describes, Kerry used to take "big rink turns." Playing hockey requires quickly switching directions on the ice, shifts that require an expenditure of considerable energy. But this wasn't Kerry's preferred tactic. Instead, he refrained from suddenly changing his course and took more circuitous, less efficient routes to find his way back to the action.

But, despite the prevalence of JFK-fixation and rink-turn stories among Kerry's classmates, it's not at all clear they're true. Many of his friends deny he was a selfish player. "He just wasn't a ball hog," says his soccer teammate Larry Rand. Or consider the JFK charge. There's no doubt that Kerry had enormous affection for Kennedy. He represented the Democratic candidate in a class debate. Outside the school dining hall, during the election year, he would emphatically make Kennedy's case. (This wasn't a popular argument to make. In the school's mock elections, Republican presidential candidates had triumphed in every election after 1860, when St. Paul's voted against Abraham Lincoln.) But, for all Kerry's Kennedy worship, it's not clear that he ever went as far as his critics allege. Almost everyone who mentions Kerry's rampant use of his initials admits the stories are hearsay. And his friends tell a very different tale. They testify that Kerry never vocalized his desire to become Kennedy and never exploited his initials. "I never heard him talking about being president," says Rand. According to Barbiero, "It was other people who teased him about the JFK thing; that was just a coincidence of time and place. Here you got this young guy very interested in politics, ... and then at the same time his initials were JFK, and there was hysteria for Kennedy. That was coincidence, and that was something he had to deal with. But that wasn't something of his making."

How then to explain the preppy hatred for Kerry? In part, the answer has to do with the changing times. During the late '50s and early '60s, the blue bloods' grip on power was coming to an end. For a long time, St. Paul's and the other New England boarding schools were the Ivy League's

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main pipeline. Every year, St. Paul's sent about half its class to Harvard and Yale. By the end of the '60s, with the introduction of the SAT and a new democratic spirit in the admissions offices, that era of dominance had ended. As William F. Buckley lamented in a 1968 *Atlantic* piece, "You will laugh, but it is true that a Mexican-American from El Paso High with identical scores on the achievement tests, and identically ardent recommendations from the headmaster, has a better chance of being admitted to Yale than Jonathan Edwards the Sixteenth from Saint Paul's School." With his hardworking style, Kerry represented the new meritocratic ethic, where success wouldn't depend on blood and charm but the earnest accumulation of achievements. Of course, Kerry may simply not have been very likeable. But, at least in part, Kerry was hated because he embodied the emerging reality that the old insular world could no longer afford to be so insular.

STRANGELY, THE DECLINE of the New England boarding schools' prestige has hardly diminished their capacity for producing politicians, from Middlesex's William Weld to St. George's Howard Dean to Andover's George W. Bush. In fact, the political strength of this group has a lot to do with their adherence to boarding-school mores. Instead of acting like "Horatio Alger on the make," they have embodied the old aristocratic spirit of "effortless achievement." They've successfully convinced the public that they are *not* conventional Washington politicians guided by personal ambition. During his campaign for Kerry's Senate seat, Weld famously jumped into the Charles River, highlighting his devil-may-care attitude toward politics. For his part, Bush has made an art form of his ability to efface his ambition, even saying during the 2000 campaign that he'd be fine if he lost the race. Inevitably, this effortless style elicits praise from the press: These boarding-school pols are "comfortable in their own skin."

While the boarding-school style may lend itself to campaigning, the striver's style has a decidedly mixed record. A whole other genre of politicians has been penalized for trying too hard, as Al Gore will testify. And now the classic gripes about the striver are being lobbed at Kerry yet again. According to the reporters on the trail, not to mention the Bush campaign, Kerry's great character flaw is his ambitiousness, manifesting itself in a willingness to say whatever it takes to please crowds. *The New York Times*' David Halbfinger wrote last month, "[Kerry] may tailor his stands to an audience or even run away from past positions." By trying too hard to win audiences, he is said to project a phony persona. As the political consultant Donna Brazile told *The Washington Post* last year, "It's like someone put him in clothes that don't fit."

There's an irony in this criticism of Kerry. In their profiles, journalists attribute his "aloofness" to his Brahman heritage and chalk up his "stiffness" to his patrician style. But this diagnosis misunderstands the true nature of the elite nurtured by places like St. Paul's. The media actually wants Kerry to become more patrician, not less; to discover his inner WASP; and to adopt a carefree attitude. In a way, it's profoundly unfair. He has spent a lifetime overcoming the St. Paul's ethos. But, now, that's exactly what's demanded of him. ■

What America can learn from its atheists.

Under God and Over

BY LEON WIESELTIER

IT WAS THE first time that William Rehnquist ever put me in mind of Søren Kierkegaard. As I watched the Supreme Court discuss God with Michael A. Newdow, the atheist from California who was defending his victory in a lower court that had concurred with his view that the words "under God" should be stricken from the Pledge of Allegiance because it is a religious expression, and was therefore responding to the Bush administration's petition to protect the theism in the Pledge, I remembered a shrewd and highly un-American observation that was included among the aphorisms in *Either/Or*: "The melancholy have the best sense of the comic, the opulent often the best sense of the rustic, the dissolute often the best sense of the moral, and the doubter often the best sense of the religious." The discussion that morning fully vindicated the majesty of the chamber, as legal themes gave way to metaphysical themes and philosophy bewitched the assembly. But something strange happened. Almost as soon as philosophy was invited, it was disinvited. It seemed to make everybody anxious, except the respondent. I had come to witness a disputation between religion's enemies and religion's friends. What I saw instead, with the exception of a single comment by Justice Souter, was a disputation between religion's enemies, liberal and conservative. And this confirmed me in my conviction that the surest way to steal the meaning, and therefore the power, from religion is to deliver it to politics, to enslave it to public life.

Some of the individuals to whom I am attributing a hostility to religion would resent the allegation deeply. They regard themselves as religion's finest friends. But what kind of friendship for religion is it that insists that the words "under

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God" have no religious connotation? A political friendship, is the answer. And that is precisely the kind of friendship that the Bush administration exhibited in its awful defense of the theistic diction of the Pledge. The solicitor general stood before the Court to argue against the plain meaning of ordinary words. In the Pledge of Allegiance, the government insisted, the word "God" does not refer to God. It refers to a reference to God. The government's argument, as it was stated in the brief filed by Theodore B. Olson, was made in two parts. The first part was about history, the second part was about society. "The Pledge's reference to 'a Nation under God,'" the solicitor general maintained, "is a statement about the Nation's historical origins, its enduring political philosophy centered on the sovereignty of the individual." The allegedly religious words in the Pledge are actually just "descriptive"—the term kept recurring in the discussion—of the mentality of the people who established the United States. As Olson told the Court, they are one of several "civic and ceremonial acknowledgments of the indisputable historical fact that caused the framers of our Constitution and the signers of the Declaration of Independence to say that they had the right to revolt and start a new country."

This is, for a start, an imprecise understanding of American origins. The American revolutionaries appealed not only to God, but also to reason; and their appeal to reason was animated by more than their feeling that reason was divine. It is historical and intellectual nonsense to believe that the concept of the sovereignty of the individual rests exclusively, or even mainly, upon religious foundations. Modernity was not merely the most recent era in the history of religion. The American order was a new idea, not a new version of an old idea. Moreover, a ceremony is not a museum. There are many notions that filled the heads of our eighteenth-century heroes that we do not reproduce in our civic life. Our reverence toward the Founders, which is eternally justified by what they wrought, is not a curatorial attitude. This is the case also with regard to their religious convictions. They were, many of them, Deists—which is to say, the United States was created in the very short period in history when it was theologically respectable to believe in a God that never intervenes in the world that He (the pronoun is ridiculous) created. In the matter of our religious origins, then, we were freakishly fortunate. No theology more convenient for a secular democracy ever existed. But there are no Deists in America anymore. This is why it was exceedingly odd to hear the controversial words in the Pledge described at the Court with Eugene Rostow's phrase "ceremonial deism." Ceremonial theism, perhaps; but that is a more highly charged activity. If there were still Deists in America, we would enjoy more cultural peace. Why do the God-inebriated opponents of the separation of church and state in America, the righteous citizens who see God's hand in everything that Fox News reports, insult the Founders by revising and even rejecting their God?

The second part of Olson's argument was a rather candid appeal to the expediency of religion. The Pledge is "a patriotic exercise and a solemnizing ceremony," which serves "the secular values of promoting national unity, patriotism, and an appreciation of the values that defined the Nation." The brief further notes that the introduction of God into the Pledge in 1954 had "a political purpose," which was to "highlight the foundational difference between the United States and Communist nations." (The brief does not cite some of the embarrassingly sectarian expostulations in that congressional debate.) It is certainly correct that the materialism of communist ideology offended many Americans; but the American dispensation differed from the Soviet dispensation in many significant ways, and it is foolish to impute all the evils of the Soviet Union to its godlessness. The record of religious states in the matter of mass persecution and mass murder does not support the political complacency of many American believers. In contemporary America, however, it seems forever necessary to repeat the elementary admonition that there is a distinction between religion and morality. At the Christian demonstration outside the Supreme Court that morning, one of the speakers remarked, as she reminded her listeners that "the Soviet Union was definitely not a nation under God," that "I guess it's not a surprise that if you don't acknowledge God you don't care about lying." Are there no religious liars? Not if you hold that religion and morality are the same; or if you deem a statement to be true because it includes a mention of God. This same silly woman went on to suggest that in the inner city "children are killing children because they have not heard 'Thou Shalt Not Kill.'" Surely the situation is more complicated and more disturbing. Surely some of those young people with guns have heard the Sixth Commandment, but it has had no effect on their ethics. Faith is not a promise of goodness, as the Bible frequently shows.

The distinction between religion and morality was championed by religious thinkers in all the monotheistic faiths, who worried that religion would be reduced to morality. Now we must worry that for many Americans morality is being reduced to religion. Newdow was right when he insisted that there is nothing paradoxical about a godless patriotism, when he ringingly concluded with the hope that "we can finally go back and have every American want to stand up, face the flag, place their hand over their heart, and pledge to one nation, indivisible, not divided by religion, with liberty and justice for all." Patriotism is certainly a mark of a polity's moral soundness, and the Pledge is one of many splendid instruments for making patriots; but patriotism, as even the solicitor general notes, is a secular value. To cherish religion for its political utility is to cherish it narrowly, selfishly, consequentially, because it allows you to accomplish one of your objectives, because it works. American conservatives love to chant Richard Weaver's old slogan that ideas have consequences; but if you are chiefly interested in the consequences, then you are not chiefly interested in the ideas. If you care primarily about patriotism or "national unity" or "civilization," then you will concern yourself with the practical impact of the phrase "under God" and not with its theoretical implication. You will neglect religion even as you

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denounce others for doing the same.

But the conservatives were not the only ones at the Supreme Court who denied religion by the manner in which they defended it. Justice Breyer wondered, in a challenge to Newdow, whether the words "under God" referred only to a "supreme being." Citing *United States* v. *Seeger* from 1965, though he might have illustrated his speculation more vividly with the historical precedent of the Cult of the Supreme Being in revolutionary Paris, Breyer proposed that such a faith "in any ordinary person's life fills the same place as belief in God fills in the life of an orthodox religionist," and so "it's reaching out to be inclusive"—so inclusive, in fact, that it may satisfy a non-believer such as Newdow. Breyer suggested that the God in "under God" is "this kind of very comprehensive supreme being, *Seeger*-type thing." And he posed an extraordinary question to Newdow: "So do you think that God is so generic in this context that it could be that inclusive, and if it is, then does your objection disappear?"

Needless to say, Newdow's objection did not disappear, because it is one of the admirable features of atheism to take God seriously. Newdow's reply was unforgettable: "I don't think that I can include 'under God' to mean 'no God,' which is exactly what I think. I deny the existence of God." The sound of those words in that room gave me what I can only call a constitutional thrill. *This* is freedom. And he continued: "For someone to tell me that 'under God' should mean some broad thing that even encompasses my religious beliefs sounds a little, you know, it seems like the government is imposing what it wants me to think in terms of religion, which it may not do. Government needs to stay out of this business altogether." So the common ground that Breyer depicted was not quite as common as he thought it was. In fact, Breyer was advocating the Lockean variety of toleration, according to which it would be based on a convergence of conviction, a consensus about the truth, among the overwhelming majority of the members of a society. The problem with such an arrangement is that the convergence is never complete and the consensus is never perfect. Locke himself instructed that "those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the Being of a God." The universal absolute is never quite universal. And there is another problem. It is that nobody worships a "very comprehensive supreme being, *Seeger*-type thing." Such a level of generality, a "generic" God, is religiously senseless. Breyer's solution was another attempt to salvage religious expression by emptying it of religious content. But why should a neutralized God be preferred to a neutral government? The preference is attractive only if religion is regarded primarily from the standpoint of politics.

THERE ARE TWO words in the phrase "under God." Each of them is indeed descriptive—but it is not our history that they describe. They describe our cosmos. Or rather, they purport to describe our cosmos. They make a statement about the universe, they paint a picture of what exists. This statement and this picture is either true or false. Either there is a God and we are under Him—the spatial metaphor, the image of a vertical reality, is one of the most ancient devices of religion—or there is not a God and we are not under Him. Since 1954, in other words, the Pledge of Allegiance has conveyed metaphysical information, and therefore it has broached metaphysical questions. I do not see how its language can be read differently. During the deliberations at the Court, only Justice Souter conceded that a cosmological claim, a worldview, is being advanced by the allusion to God in the Pledge. "I will assume that if you read the Pledge carefully, the reference to 'under God' means something more than a mere description of how somebody else once thought," he told Newdow. "The republic is then described as being under God, and I think a fair reading of that would be: I think that's the way the republic ought to be conceived, as under God. So I think there's some affirmation there. I will grant you that."

To recognize the plain meaning of the words "under God," and the nature of the investigation that they enjoin, is to discover the philosophical core of religion. This is not at all obvious to the modern interpretation of religion, and not to the American interpretation of it. After Kant explained that we can have no direct knowledge of the thing itself, and certainly not of God, religious statements have tended to be not propositions of fact, but propositions of value—expressions of inner states that are validated by the intensity of the feeling with which they are articulated. Certainty weirdly became an accomplishment of subjectivity. Kant thought that he secured religion by placing it beyond the bounds of knowledge. But this was a false security, because the vocabulary of theism continues to point to more than emotion or experience or tribe or culture. Prayer in particular remains, at least at the level of its language, an address in the second-person singular to an entity that is not oneself. Theology, if it wishes to be regarded as more than a cerebral fantasy, cannot be content to have its basis in the imagination; it must appeal to the authority of philosophy if it is to continue to speak about what is true.

Many modern believers, and modern commentators on religion, resent this. A recent historian of atheism, a Jesuit scholar, laments that in modern theology "religion was treated as if it were theism," as if it had no resources of its own to guarantee anything generally binding and true. But if religion is not theism, if its ground is not an intellectually supportable belief in the existence of God, then all the spiritual exaltation and all the political agitation in the world will avail it nothing against the skeptics and the doubters, and it really is just a beloved illusion. Others denounce the abstraction of the God of the philosophers, and the impersonality. Before such a deity, Heidegger demagogically complained, "man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance." But this is not philosophy's problem, or even religion's problem, if by religion you mean something other than an excuse to fall to your knees or to dance with your feet. If the impersonal God does not exist, I do not see how the personal God can exist.

There is no greater insult to religion than to expel strict-

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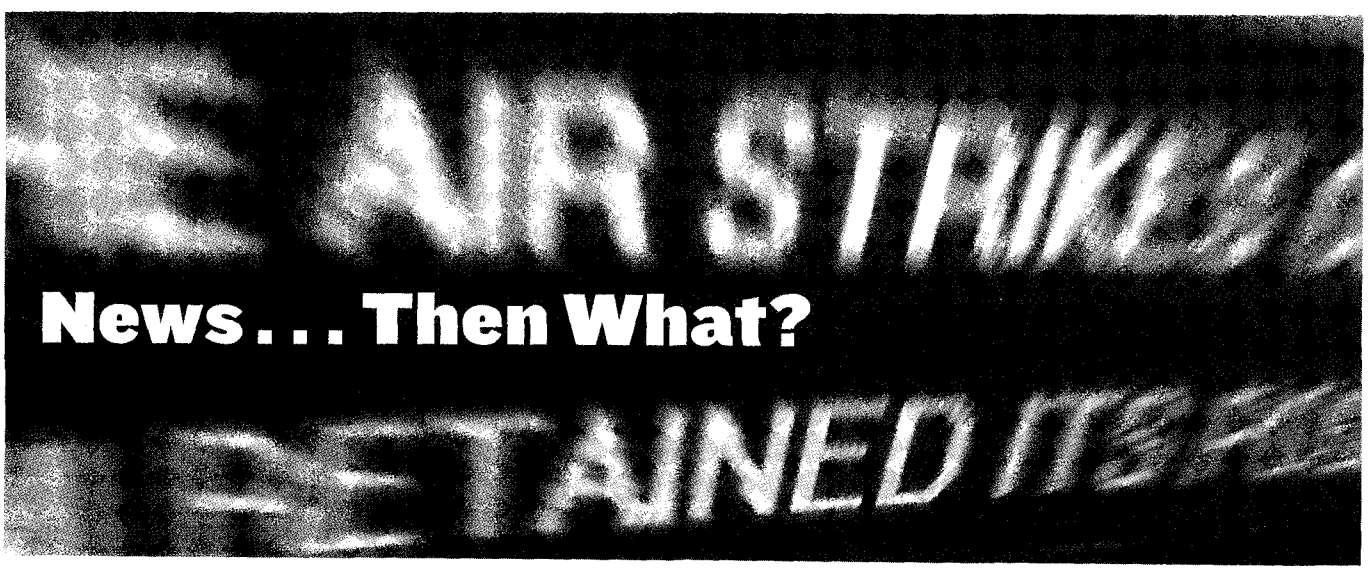
ness of thought from it. Yet such an expulsion is one of the traits of contemporary American religion, as the discussion at the Supreme Court demonstrated. Religion in America is more and more relaxed and "customized," a jolly affair of hallowed self-affirmation, a religion of a holy whatever. Speaking about God is prized over thinking about God. Say "under God" even if you don't mean under God. And if you mean under God, don't be tricked into giving an account of what you mean by it. Before too long you have arrived at a sacralized cynicism: In his intervention at the Court, Justice Stevens recalled a devastating point from the fascinating brief submitted in support of Newdow by 32 Christian and Jewish clergy, which asserted that "if the briefs of the school district and the United States are to be taken seriously," that is, if the words in the Pledge do not allude to God, "then every day they ask schoolchildren to violate [the] commandment" that "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord in vain." Remember, those are not the Ten Suggestions. It is a very strange creed indeed that asks its votaries not to reflect too much about itself.

For this reason, American unbelief can perform a great quickening service to American belief. It can shake American religion loose from its cheerful indifference to the inquiry about truth. It can remind it that religion is not only a way of life but also a worldview. It can provoke it into remembering its reasons. For the argument that a reference to God is not a reference to God is a sign that American religion is forgetting its reasons. The need of so many American believers to have government endorse their belief is thoroughly abject. How strong, and how wise, is a faith that needs to see God's name wherever it looks? (His name on nickels and dimes is rather damaging to His sublimity.) I do not mean to exaggerate the virtues of Michael Newdow: There was something too shiny about him, too dogmatic about his opposition to other people's dogmas. Atheists can be as mindless as theists. From his comments at the Supreme Court, there was no way to tell how thoughtful Newdow's arguments against theism are, or even what they are. And when Newdow insisted that there is some injury to him when his daughter "is asked every morning to say that her father is wrong" by praying in class, because "the government says there is a God and her dad says there isn't," he failed to grasp one of the ends of education, which is to make children unlike their parents. And yet Newdow's appearance at the Supreme Court was terrifically stirring. *Elk Grove Unified School District* v. *Michael A. Newdow* exposed a spiritual poverty, and honored an American tradition, and cautioned an entire country about the consequences of a smug and sloppy entanglement of religion with politics, for politics and for religion. It is never long before one nation under God gives way to one God under a nation. ■



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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Kinds of Action

TIME, IT HAS BEEN NOTED, flies. That flight will strike some viewers mightily through a new French film. **BON VOYAGE** is a farce—melodramatic but still a farce—whose background is the German invasion of France in 1940. Comedy set against a grave background is not a novelty: Ernst Lubitsch made *To Be or Not to Be*, a comedy about Warsaw under the Germans, while the Germans were very much there. But Lubitsch made it in Hollywood, a continent and an ocean away from the site, which permitted a kind of license; and oddly, though there was some objection at the time, the picture's very topicality safeguarded it. It was too soon for it to be a part of history. And it is history itself that *Bon Voyage* digs into, matters that are now virtually sanctified by a perspective on what happened then and there. Yet now, only sixty years later—a mere speck of time in the course of things—the audience is laughing.

BON VOYAGE
(Sony Pictures Classics)

DISTANT
(New Yorker)

This is not a protest. I laughed, too. Simultaneously, though, my laughter felt strange. In 1940 I was fixed to my radio, listening to the fall of France through newscasts sponsored by Bosco, a chocolate drink for kids. Six decades later Bosco has been replaced by Jean-Paul Rappeneau and a sparkling cast. Of course laughter is possible now because, unlike the Bosco days, we know who won. Still, I couldn't help feeling that laughing was a bit disrespectful.

Rappeneau, who wrote the screenplay with three colleagues, is one of those directors who do not work steadily but are amazingly dexterous when they do. He is in his seventies and has directed only fourteen films, not a very high per annum average. (Among his pictures is *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Gérard Depardieu, who is also in this new film.) The almost immediate effect of Rappeneau's directing here is not only his surety but the sense that he conceived the film beforehand, that he made it according to a stylistic plan. He uses the cities of Paris and Bordeaux in those harried days the way a farceur might propel characters through a bedroom. Pace is all—not just the pace of the editing but the physical motion of the actors. Nothing seems rushed, yet everything skims along. Add that Rappeneau has a fine compositional eye and that his cinematographer, Thierry Arbogast, understood him, and the result is a picture that, moving through political and social chaos, is stubbornly amusing.

The first key figure in the story is a film star, played by Isabelle Adjani, who is deeply in love with herself. The news of the German approach means less to her than her affairs, business and otherwise, and she involves a longtime admirer, Grégori Derangère. His help to her in a jam puts him in a jam himself. A third key figure is a government minister (Depardieu, about fifty pounds lighter than last time) itching both for Adjani and for collaboration with the Germans. Also there is a scientific genius who has to be smuggled out of France to England before the Germans get him (Jean-Marc Stehlé) and his devoted young assistant (Virginie Ledoyen). There is even a brief glimpse of de Gaulle, also being smuggled to England.

Cross purposes and narrow escapes from Paris to Bordeaux are the base of the comic twists, played against veristic shots. (One view of a long bridge absolutely jammed with refugees is breathtaking.) When it was all over, I couldn't help thinking of something extrinsic—the story conference where it was decided that it would be OK to make a farce on this subject. A small historical moment. Anyway, mild congratulations to all.

The hoary joke about *Waiting for Godot*, which is in two acts, is that it's a play in which nothing happens—twice. A Turkish film called **DISTANT** is nowhere near Beckettian quality, but although the picture, like most others, is in only one act, it is a reminder of the joke. *Godot* proves that "nothing" can be massively freighted. The "nothing" in *Distant* is at least sufficiently freighted to make us feel sad in a sort of international way.

Mahmut is a middle-aged commercial photographer living in Istanbul. Yusuf, somewhat younger, is a cousin from his hometown who comes to stay with Mahmut while looking for a job, on a ship if possible. The encounter of the two men is never warm—Mahmut had even forgotten that Yusuf was coming—but it gradually chills even further. Through some days Yusuf cannot find work, and although he is more placid than abrasive, his presence begins to wear on Mahmut. The latter is no charm bomb: he lounges around much of the time watching porn films on television, receives call girls, grouses about smoking in his apartment, and occasionally meets friends to converse about the fact that photography is dead.

Obviously the non-action is the action, the gradual simmering just because two men are occupying the same space. The intense concentration on the dull dailiness of the picture has something of the effect of those paintings and sculptures so steeped in banality that, along with the figures in them, we begin to feel imprisoned in the details. Once we get over expecting something to happen in *Distant*, we see that this Istanbul, gray and snowy, threatens us wherever we live. Repetition is the theme, or a good deal of it. The most physically active moment in the picture comes when a mouse in Mahmut's apartment is caught in a glue trap.

Distant was written and directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, and—like *Bon Voyage* but in an utterly different way—it has a strong extrinsic effect. The film might be called a moral travelogue. Instead of showing us mosques and tourist spots in

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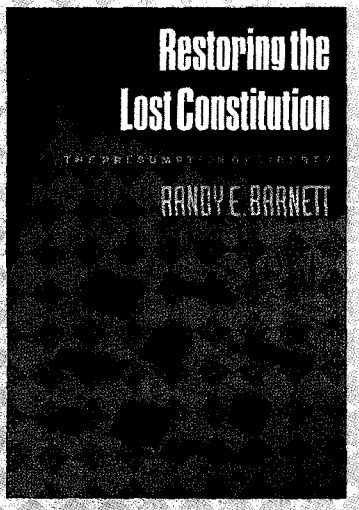

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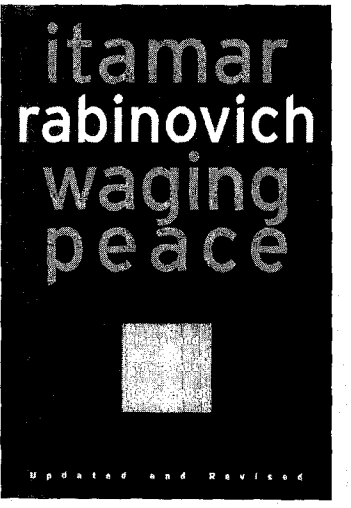

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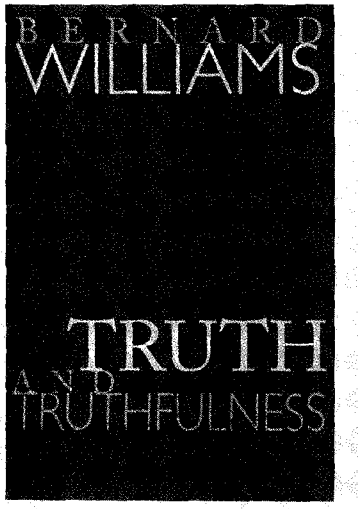

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beguiling old Istanbul, it follows a couple of ordinary Turkish men in drab surroundings and affirms that they breathe the same doubt-laden air as much of the rest of the world. Here, as in some Taiwanese and Brazilian and Finnish films, is a glimpse of a species of globalization: a pause in purpose. Obviously this does not apply to a majority of people around the world, but it applies well enough so that films touched by this hollowness arrive from all parts of the globe. Far from the full-page film ads that announce a dozen new affirmative masterpieces every week, some men and women around the world are making small films that are soaked in the perplexities of everyday living. *Distant* is one such film. ■

Alan Wolfe

Among the Non-Believers

The strange career of atheism in America.

I.

AFTER THE ENLIGHTENMENT, skepticism ought to be the rule and faith the exception. But ever since Kant said *sapere aude*, matters have not quite worked out that way, at least not in the United States. With the exception of this magazine's James Wood, believers have written the best books on atheism in recent years: James Turner's *Without God, Without Creed* in 1985 and Michael Buckley's *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* in 1987. Non-believers appear to have concluded either that the case against God is so obvious that it does not need to be argued or that the forces in favor of God are so powerful that atheism cannot get a fair hearing. Either way, American atheists seem to have consigned themselves to those obscure corners of cyberspace where no respectable thinker ventures. We lack serious treatments of why Americans might be better off intellectually, and perhaps even emotionally, if they relied more on themselves and less on powers greater than themselves, and our cultural and political life is poorer as a result.

This seems bound to change as a result of George W. Bush's presidency. Much has been made of the president's decision to plunge into the culture wars by endorsing a constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage; but from the perspective of the long struggle over faith, far more significant was his decision to remove from his Council on Bioethics a scientist sympathetic to stem-cell research and a hard-to-pigeonhole ethicist and to replace them with three new members, two of whom are political theorists of the decidedly theistic variety. Only in America could a president proclaim a desire to visit Mars while standing, Luther-like, in the way of a cure for diabetes or Parkinson's disease. Combined with "faith-based" initiatives, support for evangelical missions abroad, attempts to define fetal life, and the very public piety of John Ashcroft, this is the sort of administration that thinks it can find political advantage in "The Syllabus of Errors," Pius IX's nineteenth-century attack on liberalism. If Karl Rove believed that advocating creationism would win more votes among evangelicals than it would lose among independents, a presidential endorsement of a National Institute of Creation Science would surely follow.

All the more reason, then, to welcome the revival of interest in non-belief that has begun to spring from many different sources. Determined not to be pushed around anymore, secularists can now be found celebrating doubt, praising dissenters, and arguing on behalf of a proud separation between religion and the state. A non-believer myself, I am encouraged by their entry into American public debate. But still I worry. For non-belief owes almost everything to belief; without religion to give it meaning, atheism would be the least interesting of subjects. Dependent on believers for their existence, non-believers have long been known for the shrillness of their tone, their thinly disguised contempt for people they can barely understand, and their conviction (you might even call it religious) that they always have been and always will be on the right side of history. And so the interesting question is not whether an atheistic revival will occur—the one that is arriving is long overdue. It is whether its advocates will recognize how much belief has changed since the days of the Enlightenment, let alone over the past half-century in America, and how much non-belief has to change to keep up.

THE ATHEIST:
MADALYN MURRAY O'HAIR
By Bryan F. Le Beau
(New York University Press, 386 pp., $30)

UNGODLY:
THE PASSIONS, TORMENTS, AND MURDER OF ATHEIST MADALYN MURRAY O'HAIR
By Ted Dracos
(Free Press, 291 pp., $25)

FREETHINKERS: A HISTORY OF AMERICAN SECULARISM
By Susan Jacoby
(Metropolitan, 417 pp., $27.50)

DOUBT: A HISTORY:
THE GREAT DOUBTERS AND THEIR LEGACY OF INNOVATION FROM SOCRATES AND JESUS TO THOMAS JEFFERSON AND EMILY DICKINSON
By Jennifer Michael Hecht
(HarperSanFrancisco, 551 pp., $27.95)

AMERICA'S MOST NOTORIOUS twentieth-century atheist was Madalyn Murray O'Hair. Along with the decidedly less flamboyant Schempp family of Abington Township, Pennsylvania, Murray is responsible for the removal of prayer from America's public schools and then for her many subsequent television appearances, publicity-generating stunts, vulgar language, frustrated search for a good man ("with thigh muscles to give me a good frolic in the sack ... and yet who can go to the ballet with me and discuss Hegelian dialectic"), unending litigious instinct, and willingness to take on America's sanctimonious public culture. The first and the last of these are the reason why so many liberals supported her during her heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, and why she continues to attract people even now.

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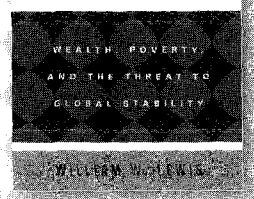

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A Memoir

Doris Drucker

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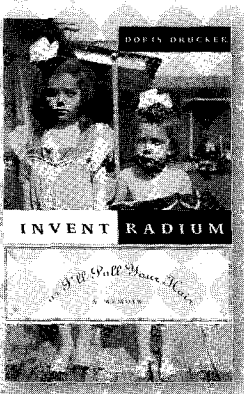

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Steven Nadler

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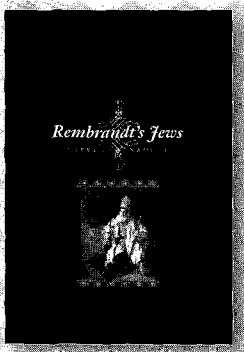

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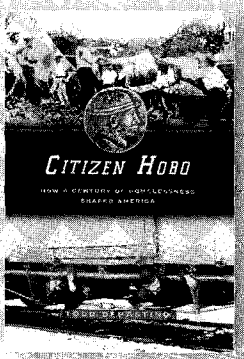

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Bryan F. Le Beau's biography, the longer and better researched of two recently published lives of Murray, is appropriately critical of its subject when she goes off the deep end, but it is far too soft on her, too. Atheists, like communists, accumulate fellow travelers: those who, however much they may condemn the irresponsibility of the messenger, still believe in the power of the message. For Le Beau, America is a far more tolerant place than it was when Murray lived and to her must go some of the credit. And so he pays relatively little attention to her character in favor of "how she came to symbolize all that postwar America hated and feared." The problem is that postwar Americans had good reason to fear Murray. She was dictatorial, irresponsible, racist, overbearing, corrupt, anti-Semitic, homophobic, anti-Catholic, and at times criminal.

Ted Dracos writes under no such illusions. Mostly told as a thriller culminating in Murray's brutal murder by one of her former employees, his thin and sensationalist book nonetheless gets closer to Murray's character than Le Beau's more earnest treatment. Dracos's biography is anything but a morality play; he is as hard on the inept Austin, Texas police force, which seemed completely uninterested in the disappearance of one of the city's most famous residents, as he is on Murray herself. About the only people who emerge sympathetically from his book are Bill Murray, Madalyn's first of two out-of-wedlock sons, and the journalists and law enforcement officials who finally cracked the case.

Bill Murray, whose unwillingness to utter prayers as a child in school brought about his mother's fame in the first place, eventually became an evangelical Christian—surely the most literal born-again conversion of the century. "I repudiate him entirely and completely for now and all times," Murray later announced. "One could call this a postnatal abortion on the part of a mother, I guess." Bill would return the favor by saying, upon the occasion of her death, that "I used to ask people to pray for my mother's salvation. I don't do that anymore.... My mother was an evil person." This family romance offers a clue about how Murray led her life. When the teenaged Bill impregnated the daughter of a prominent Orthodox Jewish anesthesiologist in Baltimore, who then filed criminal charges against him, Madalyn encouraged her son and his girlfriend to flee, thereby turning them into real lawbreakers. Eventually the family escaped to Hawaii, evidently under the impression that the island was an atheist's paradise since so many Buddhists made it their home. After the Roman Catholic governor of the state approved her extradition back to Maryland, Murray, disguised as a nun, took off for Mexico, where she promptly destroyed a fledgling experimental college that had decided, much to its eventual regret, to take her in. All charges were dropped in 1965 because the grand jury that had indicted her had been asked to swear to their belief in God, a practice that had been ruled unconstitutional.

Murray would go on to make millions off her atheism. Strangers left money to her, sometimes in six- and seven-figure amounts. At her peak, Murray could demand $40,000 for a single television appearance. To rake in more cash, she was even willing to appear at evangelical revivals as the house atheist. She needed all the money to finance her lawsuits and to build multiple national organizations for atheists that she could control. Fortunately for her, the Internal Revenue Service, which had pursued her for years, was willing to agree to a settlement that would enable her to keep most of her empire. Unfortunately for her, she never learned about the government's generosity, for by then she had been abducted by David Waters, one of the many oddballs who had collected around her. In reality a pathological killer, Waters, who had become her office manager, stole her fortune and then hacked Murray, her other son, Jon Garth, and his wife Robin into pieces before burying their parts on a remote Texas hillside. (Waters and his gang converted the Murray stash into gold bars and placed them in an insecure locker, from which they would in turn be stolen by some petty crooks who blew the fortune on strip clubs and Vegas expeditions.)

"Madalyn Murray O'Hair was difficult to love," opined Phil Donahue, who discovered her and periodically gave her considerable airtime. "She was loud. She interrupted you. She would show you no deference. She was a zealot, but she was right." But what, exactly, was Murray right about? School prayer would have been doomed had she never sued; there was another litigant, and to this day his name graces the Supreme Court's decision. Murray's other positions on church-state separation were so extreme that, had they been adopted, religious believers would have had plausible claim of serious discrimination against them. Murray would from time to time attract to her side religious leaders, especially those who believed that the boundary between church and state was either good for religion or necessary to establish conditions of toleration. But she shared little of their liberalism or appreciation for tolerance.

The plain fact is that Madalyn Murray O'Hair stood for nothing. "I am against religion," she told Paul Krassner of *The Realist*, before continuing:

> I am against schools. I am against apple pies. I am against "Americanism." I am against mothers. I am against adulterated foods. I am against nuclear fission testing. I am against commercial television. I am against all newspapers. I am against 99-and-44/100% of the magazines. I am against Eisenhower, Nixon, Kennedy, Lodge. I'm even against giving the country back to the Indians.

This is a woman who makes Ralph Nader look sunny.

Murray was finally a product of her times; the decade that gave us the syrupy "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance also gave us this crudely embarrassing atheist. Her gruesome death brought her back into the limelight, but only momentarily. And two biographies are unlikely to transform her considerably tarnished reputation. "If I could fault Madalyn for anything," said her onetime friend Larry Flynt, "it would be for making her atheism her religion.... She could have given Osama bin Laden a run for his money." No, actually, she could not have; but while Murray was not a terrorist, her slash-and-burn tactics, as Flynt also observed, eerily mimic the no-holds-barred tactics of the Christian right. Hers was decidedly not an appeal to reason. Madalyn Murray brought on herself the status of a historical footnote to which she appears to be consigned.

II.

At one point in her life Madalyn Murray gave herself a crash course in the history of atheism, identifying with such historical figures as Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, and Robert

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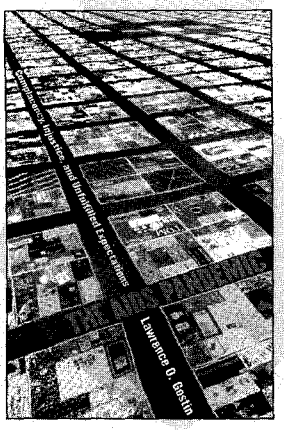

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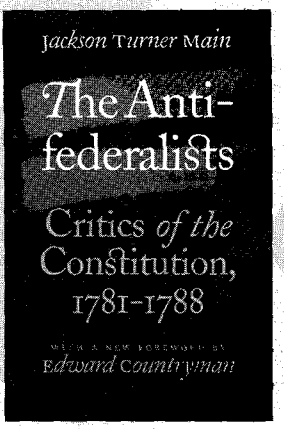

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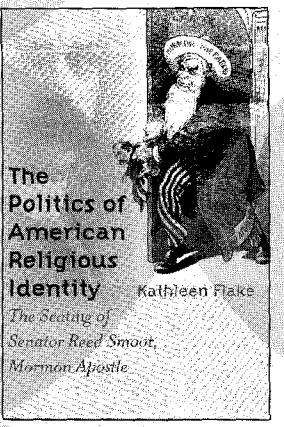

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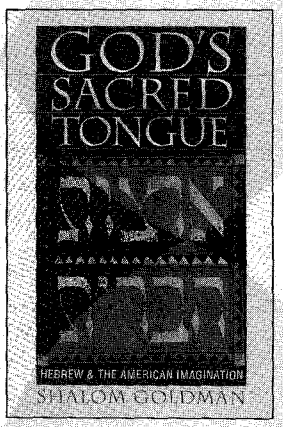

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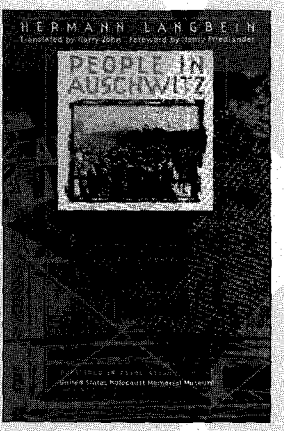

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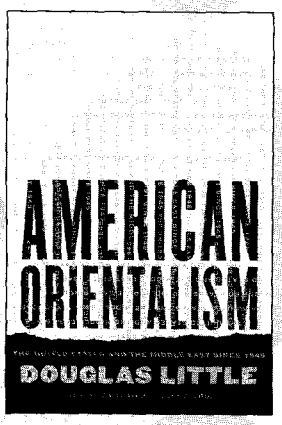

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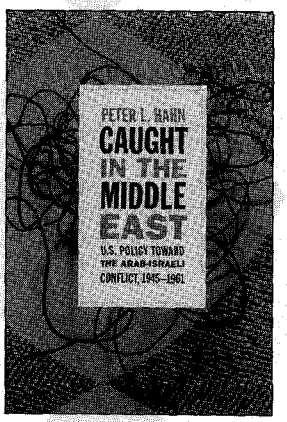

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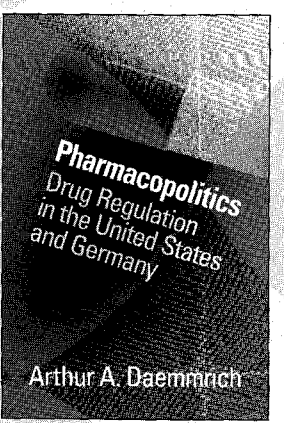

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Ingersoll. The last of these, and the only American among the three, occupies a prominent place in Susan Jacoby's *Freethinkers*, an ambitious book that clearly aspires to give non-belief the prominence in American culture that Jacoby feels it deserves.

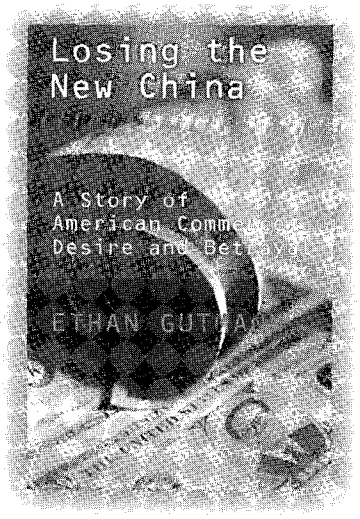
Ingersoll is certainly worth (if you'll pardon the expression) resurrecting. A devoted family man, he offered his enemies no sensational trysts by which his cause could be undermined. He was a politically adept figure who could have run for public office had he not been so prominent an atheist; as it happened, he achieved lasting fame through his oratory. He was a Republican by political conviction, not only on account of the party's anti-slavery heritage but also out of a distaste for William Jennings Bryan–style populism. Indeed, as if to suggest parallels with the Republican Party's greatest leader, Ingersoll, who was also from Illinois, continually appealed to the "better angels" residing in the nature of those who heard him. Jacoby is right to claim that "without him, the golden age of American freethought is as difficult to imagine as abolitionism without Garrison or the first wave of feminism without Stanton."

Oddly, though, Jacoby finds Ingersoll's message "overly optimistic." For all her adoration of Ingersoll, Jacoby clearly prefers atheists with a rougher edge. One such was Ernestine L. Rose, a Polish-born Jew who arrived in the United States from Great Britain in 1836. "She was the Emma Goldman of the 1840s and 1850s," Jacoby writes—not only a supporter of abolitionism and women's rights, but, unlike more refined Protestant reformers such as Lucretia Mott, an explicit nonbeliever. Jacoby views Rose as "uncompromising," a term of great admiration in Jacoby's vocabulary, even though Rose's strict principles led her to positions that could have prolonged the Civil War (she opposed suspending women's rights conventions while the war was in progress) and might have delayed the arrival of freedom (she opposed the Fifteenth Amendment because it extended suffrage to freed male slaves but not to women).

Yet for all her courage, Jacoby argues, Ernestine Rose has been ignored by history. Being an atheist in our devout society, you see, condemns you to obscurity. That is why there exists material aplenty in the archives devoted to Rose's contemporary Rebecca Gratz, who was a religious Jew and an established figure. "The issue is not whether Gratz or Rose is the more important historical figure," Jacoby writes, "but that the memory of a pious founder of charities is much more likely to be preserved than that of an atheist who challenged the norms of her own generation and subsequent ones." And so we are introduced to one of Jacoby's major arguments, which is that those marginalized in our past due to their non-belief will continue to be marginalized in the present and future.

ON THE FACE OF IT, THIS CLAIM is absurd. Ingersoll, contrary to what Jacoby writes, has not been "forgotten." He is a major figure in American intellectual history, if for no other reason than for his dissent from the pieties of his era. Others celebrated by Jacoby for their freethinking, including William Lloyd Garrison, Walt Whitman, and Margaret Sanger, are far better known to posterity than important religious figures such as Alexander Campbell, Charles Gradison Finney, and J. Gresham Machen. Audiences to this day laugh at the Scopes trial antics of William Jennings Bryan while cheering the iconoclast Clarence Darrow. Madalyn Murray's atheism did not exactly transform her into a shrinking media violet. And how many people remember Rebecca Gratz?

One religious dissenter celebrated by Jacoby who did achieve significant historical fame is Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leader of the first wave of American feminism. Stanton spent a major portion of her late years writing *The Woman's Bible*, an attack on Christianity for its male-centeredness, and she also gave frequent speeches arguing that organized religion was hostile to women. In this regard, she stood in sharp contrast to Susan B. Anthony, who concluded, not without reason, that it would be good to have on the side of female suffrage all those myriad women willing to join a Christian temperance organization. By Jacoby's lights, we ought to be celebrating Anthony and forgetting Stanton—but, as even Jacoby concludes, Stanton is hardly treated as a non-person by contemporary feminists. And so Jacoby, to protect her thesis, shifts her ground. Yes, Stanton is well known, but "the essential role of agnostics in the women's rights movement has never been acknowledged."



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The conspiracy of the devout is so vast and deep that even Stanton's own children, Blatch and Theodore, contributed to it by tampering with her letters and her diary. But their efforts failed. "Fortunately for future historians," Jacoby writes, "the children could not destroy the original edition of their mother's autobiography—or the public records of her many speeches, so repellent to conservative suffragists, declaring that no woman could be free as long as she let her minister, priest, rabbi, or imam tell her what to do." (I admit that I have not read many of Stanton's writings, but somehow I doubt that she concerned herself with the Islamic threat.) But if her family was unable to suppress Stanton's hostility toward religion, then her freethinking has become as widely acknowledged as her fame has become secure. In neither its strong nor its weak form, in short, does Jacoby's thesis about the historical neglect of freethinking in America hold up.

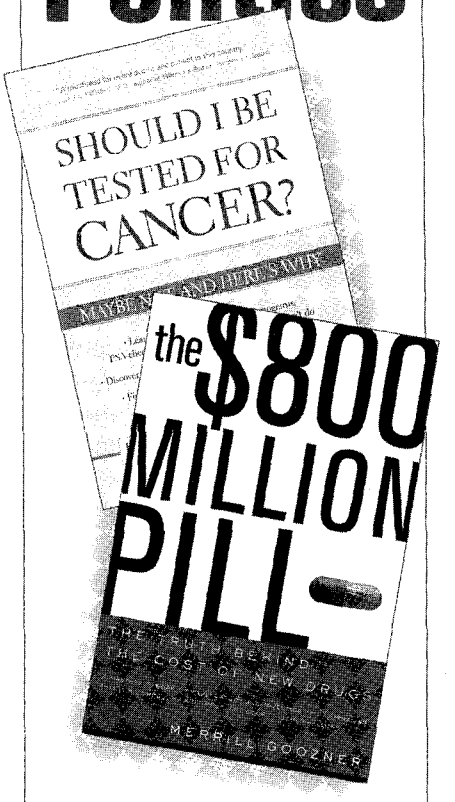
If Stanton's agnosticism has not been slighted by later generations, neither has her racism. "Think of Patrick and Sambo ... and Yung Tung," Stanton proclaimed in 1869 to the National Woman's Suffrage Association, "who do not know the difference between a monarchy and a republic, who can not read the Declaration of Independence or Webster's spelling book, making laws for Lucretia Mott, Ernestine L. Rose, and Anna E. Dickinson." It is to Jacoby's credit that she cites these words, but she never pauses to reflect on them. Had she done so, it might have occurred to her that atheism and bigotry may have a more intimate relationship than she imagines. We ought never to forget that the twentieth century's greatest American skeptic, H. L. Mencken, was an ugly anti-Semite. Refusing to believe in God does not by itself make you right-thinking.

Anti-Semitism is no longer as fashionable as it was in Stanton's day, but when it comes to questions involving religion's role in American public life, a fleeting anti-Catholicism is not difficult to detect. Nearly all of Jacoby's nineteenth-century freethinkers had the Catholic Church in mind when they denounced religion, especially if they were New England liberals. (The Church's position on slavery was not one to admire.) Regrettably, much the same could be said of twentieth-century thinkers. Paul Blanshard's best-seller *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, which appeared in 1949, is, by today's light, an embarrassing screed against a religion that was in the process of dramatic changes that Blanshard never noticed. Hugo Black, a hero to strict separationists, joined the Ku Klux Klan in his youth as much for its hostility to Catholics as for its racism, and, as Philip Hamburger recently argued in *The Separation of Church and State*, Black's later decisions on religion cases cannot always be distinguished from his hostility toward the Church of Rome.

Jacoby's attitude toward these thinkers is puzzling at best. She never mentions Black's Klan membership. As for Blanshard, she acknowledges that his book was anti-Catholic, but then goes on to praise it, and the responses that it elicited, as possessing "a refreshing integrity ... because they begin with the premise that religious differences are as important as religious commonalties." The truth is that neither Blanshard nor Francis Cardinal Spellman, who took the lead in defending the Church against his attacks, honored himself with their self-serving and often ignorant attacks on each other. It says a great deal about Jacoby that she admires their polemics. For here is the world as she believes it ought to be, filled with symbolic autos-da-fé and martyrs, as truth-telling rationalists confront the blind prejudices of grand inquisitors. Such hysteria is good for opera but bad for history. In America, we have had neither a clerical tradition nor an anti-clerical one, to the evidently endless frustration of our would-be Voltaires.

If freethinking is no inoculation against bigotry, faith can be a friend of inclusion. Nineteenth-century evangelicals, including many who were anti-Catholic, were also in the forefront of the anti-slavery movement, just as twentieth-century Baptists, at least of the Martin Luther King Jr. variety, fought against racial segregation. Reforms that contributed to the modern welfare state owe more to the Social Gospel advocate Walter Rauschenbusch and the Catholic activist (and abortion opponent) Monsignor John A. Ryan than they do to Robert Ingersoll and the unabashed eugenicist Margaret Sanger. Even though Jacoby is capable of recognizing that Social Darwinists such as William Graham Sumner also happened to be freethinkers, she treats such associations only parenthetically; it is simply

Health Politics



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axiomatic to her that since good liberals believe in equality and do not believe in God, the one attitude must be related to the other. And when she cannot ignore the fact that the world does not actually work that way, her response is breathtaking in its audacity: she rearranges the political and religious convictions of the individuals whom she discusses to fit her preconceptions. In the case of Ingersoll, she likes his agnosticism but dislikes his membership in the Republican Party, and so she concludes, with a touch of the seer that she would otherwise condemn as superstitious, that "had Ingersoll lived longer, his economic views would have likely been modified by the upheavals of the twentieth century."

Knowing better than Ingersoll what he really believed about matters of political economy, Jacoby has little trouble telling the faithful what they really believe about God. Consider her treatment of Lucretia Mott. Mott was a fervent advocate of abolition and an early supporter of women's rights. She was also, like the similarly inclined Grimké sisters of South Carolina, a member of the Society of Friends. The Quakers, especially the more radical Hicksite branch of the movement to which all these figures belonged, were neither evangelical enthusiasts nor Calvinistic pessimists, but there is no questioning their religious sensibility. Yet Jacoby wants to claim them for the freethinking camp, as she also does for William Lloyd Garrison (a spiritualist), Walt Whitman (a pantheist), and one of the biologists whom Darrow wanted to call to the stand in the Scopes trial (a Christian).

JACOBY SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT she can decide which religions are really religious and which are not. Catholics, conservative Protestants, and even Quakers (if they take the form of "Red Scare" Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer) belong in the first group, while non-observant and Reform Jews, Unitarians, and left-wing Catholics have more in common with the traditions of free thought. Her book is not a criticism of religion and a defense of non-belief. It is instead an attack on those believers with whom she has little political sympathy and an appreciation of those with whose views she agrees.

By blending together religion and politics, Jacoby misunderstands both. Her confusions become even more noticeable as she arrives closer to the present. Jacoby revisits American history for a reason: she wants to show the degree to which the religious zealots of our past lead directly to our faith-based presidency, just as the president's critics ought to identify with the freethinkers of the previous centuries. Yet it is with the present administration that the religious and political agendas of her book find themselves ripped asunder. Politically, Jacoby's leftist sensibilities should lead her to conclude that Bush, who lost the popular vote in the last election and has never had widespread support for his policies, is a vulnerable president facing potential defeat the next time around. Yet to support her thesis that America is a pious society that "has consigned many nonreligious and social progressives to a historical memory hole," she has to argue that Bush's religious agenda is shared by the majority of Americans and presents overwhelming obstacles for those who think as Jacoby does. Opting firmly for the latter interpretation, she concludes with a portrait of contemporary America that would warm the hearts of the Moral Majority—if the Moral Majority still existed. (It fell into the same memory hole as Ernestine Rose.)

Jacoby begins her final chapter by citing a speech by Justice Antonin Scalia in 2002. "For the believing Christian," Scalia stated before his University of Chicago Divinity School audience, "death is no big deal." He went on to argue in favor of the death penalty, not only on constitutional grounds but also by invoking God on his side. Horrified by his comments, Jacoby sees in them the key to the Bush administration's success. It is not just money and political skill that have enabled the right-wing to govern, she insists.

An equally important factor—indeed, an indispensable condition for the success of the ultra-conservative minority—is the larger American public's unexamined assumption that religion per se is, and always must be, a benign influence on society. The extreme right has exploited that assumption brilliantly and succeeded in tarring opponents of faith-based adventurism as enemies of all religion, as atheists, as "relativists."

Now, I do not doubt that Scalia is wildly egregious in his comments, just as

Punishment

For four thousand years
I've endured the bad metaphors
of self-righteous rabbis who lift

their arms to the sky as if they could
bring on another cataclysm.
I've endured the ridicule of priests,

kings and slaves, the memory
of my husband shepherding our daughters
into the wilderness with his staff. I've endured

fear, the judgment of history
and my own dark thoughts.
Silk robes, spices, urns,

the words of my ancestors—it all burned
to ash, and the ash swirled
in the sea of winds sweeping through the desert.

Great sheets of sand buried
the fire. Cities rose and fell
wickeder than Sodom or Gomorrah.

Each century I gave away
a little more—my index finger,
the tip of my nose, my left breast—

until all that was left was
a broken torso and the unblinking
vision of a bitter memory,

my eyes white and hard
from staring at the same emptiness,
from remembering how comets of fire

hailed down from heaven, torching
the walls of my house. And then
I dissolved into a muffled cry,

into a blinding whiteness,
a few grains of salt
burning the eyes of god.

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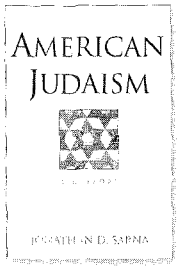

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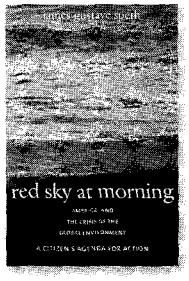

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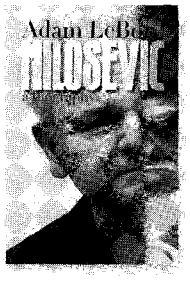

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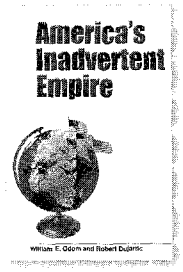

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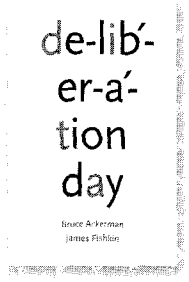

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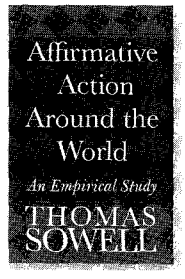

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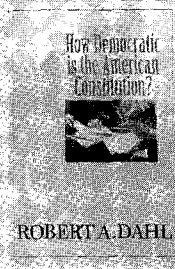

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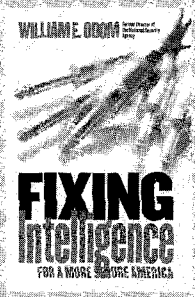

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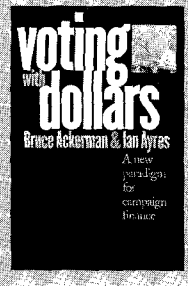

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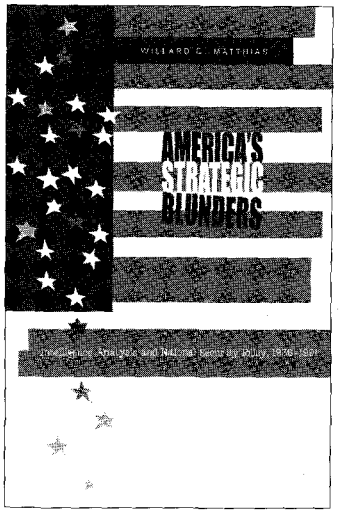

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I am persuaded that nothing would stop President Bush's efforts to blast down the wall between church and state if doing so fit his re-election needs. But to argue, as Jacoby does, that most Americans are so blinded by their sympathy for religion that they are willing to allow a minority of zealots to run roughshod over their historic commitment to church-state separation is to misunderstand both America and the religions it contains.

JACOBY'S TALE IS A JEREMIAD AS A non-believer would write one: we were more enlightened in the eighteenth century and, as evidenced by the Bush administration, are more superstitiously irrational in the twenty-first. I see little evidence to support such a declensionist claim. True, compared with other wealthy liberal democracies, America stands out for the role that religion plays in our politics and cultural life. But compared with the great awakenings of our past, our current fascination with faith shows little of the zealous passion that burned over districts of New York state or that convinced conservative Protestants to return to their fundamentals. In more fervent periods, born-again Christians would have avoided politics. The fact that they now run for president is testimony to their influence, but it is also an indication of their worldliness. They want to join, not to reject, the culture, even at the risk of allowing the culture to influence them. What makes religion interesting in America today is what makes it different from religion in America yesterday.

But Jacoby can see none of this, because faith to her is always the same, so that freethinking is always heroic. And so just about everything that Jacoby says about the current religious and political situation in the United States strikes a false note. Yes, Scalia gave his talk to the University of Chicago Divinity School and later published it in the small and sectarian journal *First Things*, but it was also subject to a thorough criticism before a much larger audience when Sean Wilentz dissected it in *The New York Times*. (That is evidently how it came to Jacoby's attention.) Opposition in Congress to Bush's plans for faith-based initiatives was so strong that the administration was forced to achieve its goals by executive order. Both state governments and private companies have joined foreign countries to work around (and in defiance of) Bush's absurd restrictions on stem cells. The president may lose more votes because of his stand on gay marriage than he will win. Americans are more committed to the separation of church and state today than they were in the days of Jefferson and Madison. The Supreme Court has moved to accommodate religious believers in its church-state jurisprudence, but in February, by a seven-to-two vote, it also ruled that states can withhold public funds for students engaged in theological training.

The time is right for Jacoby's book, but the book is wrong. The last thing we need, if we are to create a political climate in which scientific research can go forward and public policies can be judged on the basis of something other than theological correctness, is to exaggerate the influence of belief in order to advance the agenda of non-belief. If I were a theocrat, I would hunger for antagonists such as Jacoby. For then we could argue about issues that were resolved a century or two ago, all the while leaving the status quo firmly in place. Freethinking in America will have to await another champion.

III.

IT WOULD BE AN EXAGGERATION TO claim that Jennifer Michael Hecht is such a champion. Her book is too eccentric for that; yet her refreshingly original take on matters of belief and non-belief definitely shows the way. But first you have to get past the book's subtitle.

Calling Jesus one of the "great doubters" takes a bit of getting used to. As I followed Hecht's argument, though, her claim began to make more sense. "Great believers and great doubters," Hecht writes in her introduction, "seem like opposites, but they are more similar to each other than to the mass of relatively disinterested or acquiescent men and women." To be either a believer or a doubter, you must accept two propositions. One is that you are human. The other is that the universe of which you are a part is not. Those who believe that the tension between these propositions can be bridged by imagining a force governing the universe that shares human characteristics are believers. Those who insist that the bridge consists in imagining human beings as collections of physical or biological elements not fundamentally dissimilar from the universe are doubters. But both understand that there

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is a problem in need of a solution, which is why doubt means more than denial of the existence of God; it also requires faith in something—cosmology, morality, and for all I know social science—for a world without God.

Doubt has a history, and Hecht traces it through so many byways and detours that the reader can barely keep pace. Unlike Jacoby, she does not limit herself to the United States. Unlike any reasonably sensible person, she does not limit herself to anything, anywhere. She begins in ancient Greece, appropriately enough, but within a few pages she finds herself discussing the Carvaka in late seventh-century BCE India, conversing with Huan T'an and Han Fei Tzu in third-century BCE China, and then engaging the Persia-based Manichees to find out what attracted Augustine to them from his home in Africa. Hecht has an opinion on just about everything, such as whether it is appropriate to use the labels "reform" and "orthodox" to distinguish between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, or whether Koheleth, the author of Ecclesiastes, had the early Greek mystery god Tyche on his mind when he wrote his magnificent words. It would be incorrect to see all this as great erudition; Hecht borrows liberally from other writers. But it does suggest a remarkable curiosity. Since doubt exists everywhere God exists, and since God seems to exist everywhere, Hecht is determined to track down doubt in as many places as humanly possible.

Although she returns at various points in her long book to bring Buddhism or Taoism up to date, most of Hecht's focus is on doubt in the West. Here her thesis about the mutual symbiosis between doubt and faith is both useful and frustrating. One of her reasons for mentioning Jesus in her subtitle is her view that Christianity raised the stakes of doubt when compared with Judaism. No longer was God an unseen presence known mostly through the commandments that he asked humans to obey; he was suddenly here among us, in human form, and Christians either had to accept this miracle or give up their faith. The natural reaction was to doubt: how could such a sudden shift in the nature of the deity have taken place? But if the doubt was endured, the faith became stronger. "Belief had never been so charged with redemptive power," Hecht writes, which may be true, but the kind of doubt that leads to Pauline faith is anything but the kind of doubt that leads to non-belief. As much as I admire Hecht for her audacity, doubt loses its focus as she proceeds. Yes, Jesus had his doubts, including ones uttered on the cross; but that is not why so many people worship him.

FOR ALL HER HISTORY, THEN, Hecht does not challenge the widely accepted notion that modern doubt, the product of the Enlightenment, really was something new in the world. Writing of the famous dinner organized by Baron d'Holbach that brought David Hume into contact with Diderot, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, Hecht writes: "This was the first group of actual avowed atheists: no dissembling, no caveats, just no gods, no God, nothing like it." In the last two hundred or so pages of her book, Hecht offers a sweeping tour of modern doubt, whizzing past Tom Paine, Fanny Wright, and, yes, Robert Ingersoll. Determined to touch as many societies as she can, and to include non-Western religions as well, her treatment of any one country, including the United States, is sketchier than the one

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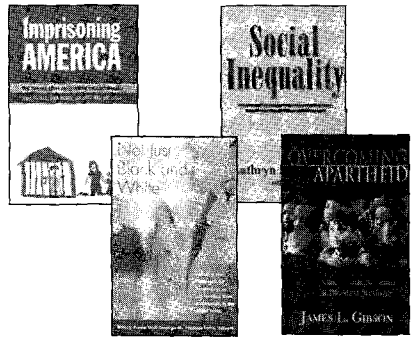

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found in Jacoby's book. But Hecht offers something that Jacoby sorely lacks: sufficient confidence in doubt to resist insisting on its vulnerability to faith.

It is politics, Hecht writes, as if with Jacoby in mind, that drives us to use such terms as believer, agnostic, and atheist. We can think more clearly if we simply *do not use such terms at all*: "When religion stays out of politics (in the broad sense of the term), atheism quiets down to a calm chat: we hear about it from contemplative people, with little or no attack on the mythic aspects of religion, because in these circles, none is necessary." Hecht recognizes, as Jacoby so often fails to do, that there are good and bad people on both sides of the divide between faith and doubt. Mostly, though, she offers the respect for faith that doubters so often lack. "Belief is one of the best human muscles," she concludes. "The religions are all beautiful and horrible, filled with feasts, sacrifices, miracles, wars, songs, lamentations, stained glass, onion matzos, and intense communal joy: everyone kneeling, everyone rocking, everyone silent, everyone nose to the floor. The religions have also been the energy behind much generosity, compassion, and bravery. The story of doubt, however, has all this, too."

Hecht is right that doubt's story deserves to be told, and while she tells it too breezily, she also tells it in just the right spirit. Doubt, by its very nature, ought to shy away from certainty; but from Madalyn Murray O'Hair to Susan Jacoby, non-belief has been certain to the point of dogmatic sectarianism. Hecht is the rare doubter who can simultaneously disagree with people of faith while granting them respect and taking their ideas seriously. The calm she seeks out should be welcomed not so much in matters of faith—religion and non-religion raise first questions about the world that deserve heated exchange—but in matters of politics. Whatever our differences over faith, Americans belong to a common political community in which, assuming that we will continue to live together, we must find ways of talking to each other and not just past each other. ■

Gordon S. Wood
Pursuits of Happiness

THE LETTERS OF JOHN AND ABIGAIL ADAMS
Edited with an introduction and notes by Frank Shuffelton
(Penguin Books, 473 pp., $15)

ALL THE MANY THOUSANDS of people who presumably have read David McCullough's best-selling biography of John Adams know what a wonderful marriage John and Abigail Adams had. Their marriage was different in almost every way from those of the other prominent Founders. To many historians it seems almost modern, and over the years it has been idealized as such. Unlike the marriages of most of the other Founders, the Adamses' union appeared to offer little financial advantage to either party. Although Abigail's father, Reverend William Smith, was the minister in Weymouth, and her mother was a Quincy (a wealthy and important Massachusetts family), John Adams did not seem to worry much about his wife's estate or dowry. If anything, it was the Reverend Smith who worried about his nineteen-year-old daughter's marrying beneath her social station by taking as her husband the son of a modest Braintree farmer and shoemaker.

The marriage was certainly not a hasty one. John courted Abigail for nearly five years, and so he came to know what an emotionally and intellectually compatible mate she would make. Theirs represented an emerging new kind of marriage—what historians have called companionate marriage, in which husbands, in the genteel conventional wisdom expressed by Abigail, "willingly give up the harsh title of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend." Insofar as the unromantic eighteenth century allowed, theirs was a marriage of love.

The Adamses were not just spouses and lovers; they were also each other's best friend and intellectual partner. "Am I not your bosom friend?" Abigail asked her husband in 1775; and that was how she continued to think of their relationship. "My dearest friend," she called him. "How much is comprised in that short sentence? How fondly can I call you mine, bound by every tie which consecrates the most inviolable friendship, yet separated by a cruel destiny, I feel the pangs of absence sometimes too sensibly for my own repose." The Adamses needed each other, and for all the time they were apart—between 1778 and 1784 they were together for only three months—they never became used to being separated.

John needed someone to confide in, someone to salve his many wounds, someone who was as smart as he was, who had good judgment, and who could keep his exuberance and passion under control. "I must entreat you, my dear Partner," he said to her at the outset, "in all the Joys and Sorrows, Prosperity and Adversity of my Life, to take a Part with me in the Struggle." And she became his loyal comrade, supporting and encouraging him in all his challenges and crises. "I can do nothing without you," he told her over and over. For her part, Abigail needed someone she could respect and love at the same time. She told her "partner" and "dearest friend" time and again how much she missed him. She prayed for him and yearned "to fold to my fluttering heart the object of my warmest affections." She thought of him all the time: "I never close my eyes at night till I have been to Philadelphia, and my first visit in the morning is there."

Most of the other Revolutionary leaders still conceived of marriage in a traditional way, less as the coming together of two like minds and more as a means of property acquisition and social advancement. They tended to think of it in dynastic terms, as a manner of building alliances and establishing or consolidating their position in society. George Washington in 1758 was in debt and looking for a wealthy bride to help him become a gentleman planter and to finance the completion of Mount Vernon. The rich young widow Martha Custis brought the estate that he very much needed: £40,000 and 18,000 acres of land. Although their marriage seems to have been comfortable enough, it

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was, as Washington later explained to a lady friend, "more fraught with expressions of friendship than of enamoured love." While he was engaged to Martha in 1758, in fact, Washington was in love with another woman, Sally Fairfax, the wife of his friend and patron. But Washington, like most gentry in that practical age, was not about to let love get in the way of his ambitions and his needs.

Like Washington, Thomas Jefferson married a rich widow. From his union with Martha Wayles Skelton he received 135 slaves, including the Hemings family, and 11,000 acres of land that helped him in his construction of Monticello. Although Jefferson apparently had a romantic relationship with Martha, we do not know much about it. Her death in 1782 after a decade of marriage certainly devastated him. He was knocked out for weeks and, as he said, only slowly emerged from a "stupor of mind" that had rendered him "as dead to the world as she was whose loss occasioned it." Jefferson destroyed all their letters and thereafter deliberately refrained from writing anything about her. The little that we know suggests that their relationship was traditionally patriarchal, not like the Adamses'.

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TODAY TO appreciate how different that patriarchal eighteenth century was, not just in its general acceptance of slavery but also in its treatment of women. Women rarely had an independent existence, at least in law. In public records they were usually referred to as the "wife of," or the "daughter of," or the "sister of," a man. Before marriage, women legally belonged to their fathers, and after marriage they belonged to their husbands. A married woman was a *femme covert*: she could not sue or be sued, make contracts, draft wills, or buy and sell property. It went without saying that women could not hold political office or vote. They were considered to be dependent like children, and their husbands often treated them like children. A husband might address his wife as "dear Child" or by her Christian name, but he would be addressed in return as "Mr."

Jefferson called his wife "Patty," but he did not regard her, any more than he did his daughters, as his intellectual equal. Martha Jefferson was gentle and musical, befitting the role that Jefferson assumed for women. Whatever Martha was to him, she was not the kind of intellectual companion that Abigail was to John Adams. As Jefferson's biographer Dumas Malone pointed out, Jefferson "had no advanced ideas about women" and thought of childbearing as a woman's "trade." When the Marquis de Chastellux visited Monticello in 1782, he described everything about his host and the house in minute detail, but scarcely mentioned Martha. This was never true of Abigail: foreign visitors to the Adamses' household always felt her intellectual presence.

Alexander Hamilton also sought an advantageous marriage—to Elizabeth Schuyler, a member of one of the most distinguished families of New York. Although Hamilton was certainly smitten with Eliza's black eyes, and warned her that her "future rank in life is a perfect lottery" in which she might have to "move in a very humble sphere," he was well aware that she was a daughter of a gentleman of "large fortune and no less personal and public consequences." As attractive as Eliza Schuyler was, and as much as she advanced Hamilton's career, she was never his intellectual partner. Although she had good sense, Hamilton admitted that she was "not a genius." In fact, Hamilton had much more in common with Eliza's witty and vivacious married older sister, so much so that many people assumed that they were lovers.

THE STRANGEST OF THE PRINCIpal Founders' marriages was probably James Madison's late union with Dolley Payne Todd in 1794. Madison was an old bachelor who apparently had never been at ease with women. Although he could be quite congenial in small groups of men, where he liked to tell smutty stories, in large mixed groups he was shy, stiff, and awkward. Only women who were a good deal younger than he seemed approachable. In the winter of 1782–1783, when he was thirty-three, he lost his heart to Kitty Floyd, the fifteen-year-old daughter of a New York delegate serving with him in the Continental Congress. When Kitty accepted his quick proposal of marriage, Madison became as excited as he had ever been about anything and eagerly prepared for the wedding; but the young Miss Floyd changed her mind

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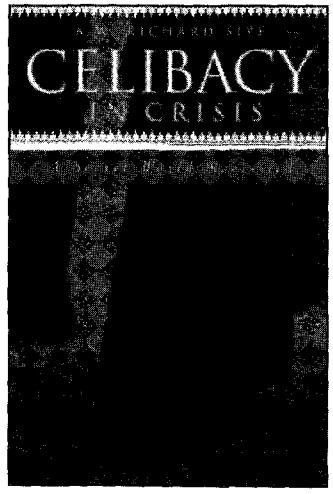

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and in the summer of 1783 broke the engagement in a letter containing, as the crestfallen Madison told his friend Jefferson, the young woman's "profession of indifference."

After being jilted in this jarring manner, Madison waited ten years before approaching another woman. At the age of forty-three he became attracted to the twenty-six-year-old widow Dolley Payne Todd and asked Aaron Burr to introduce them. Since by 1794 Madison had become a major political figure and the leader of the emerging Republican Party, Dolley could not help being excited to meet "the great little Madison." Madison fell head over heels for her, so much so that Dolley's Virginia cousin, reporting Madison's feelings to her, said that "he thinks so much of you in the day that he has lost his Tongue; at Night he Dreames of you and starts in his sleep a Calling on you." Madison wasted no time in proposing, and he and Dolley were married that same year. As Dolley explained in a letter to a friend on her wedding day, she was marrying "a man who of all others I most admire." The marriage promised her "everything that is soothing and grateful," including giving her young son from her first marriage "a generous and tender protector." But on her part it was hardly a love match. After the wedding ceremony and before going to her husband's bed, she added a hurried postscript to the letter that she had earlier signed "Dolley Payne Todd": "Evening—Dolley Madison! alas! alas!"

Although the Madisons' marriage was childless, it otherwise flourished, and Dolley grew to love her "beloved" and "dearest husband." The gregarious and good-tempered Mrs. Madison became the queen of hostesses. She may not have been Madison's intellectual companion—an English diplomat described her as being of "an uncultivated mind and fond of gossiping"—but she did solve the problem of Madison's awkwardness in large gatherings. When Madison became president and held official dinners, Dolley seated herself at the head of the table, with Madison's private secretary seated at the foot. Madison himself sat in the middle, and was thus relieved of having to look after his guests and control the flow of conversation. As a brilliant Washington hostess, Dolley Madison created a public persona that rivaled that of her illustrious husband.

Of the major Founders, only Benjamin Franklin, in attaching himself to the lowly Deborah Read in a common-law marriage, seems to have married neither for love nor to better himself. He had in fact first proposed to another woman, but when he asked her parents for a £100 dowry, he was rebuffed. Only then did he turn to Deborah Read. Of course, as a struggling young printer Franklin may have sensed that Deborah could help him economically; she certainly turned out to be as shrewd and frugal as he was, and she never ceased working to bring money into the household. But the real reason that Franklin married her may have been the fact that he came to the marriage with a new son born of another woman, whom Deborah would have to raise. Given these circumstances, Deborah Read may have been the only woman in Philadelphia who would have accepted him and his illegitimate son.

WHAT SETS OFF THE Adamses' marriage from those of the other Founders is the quantity and the quality of their correspondence. Since John was so much away from home—at first riding the circuit courts as a young attorney, then attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, and later as minister in Europe—he and Abigail exchanged more than a thousand letters, only half of which have ever been published. This new edition of 284 of their letters between 1774 and 1783 offers no new correspondence. It is actually an updated version of an edition of 1876 titled *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution*, edited by their grandson Charles Francis Adams. In his edition Charles Francis suppressed passages and changed spelling, grammar, and punctuation, especially in Abigail's letters. Frank Shuffelton, the editor of this volume, has restored the suppressed passages but has generally left the spelling and punctuation as they were in the 1876 edition. (He does retain Abigail's reports of the children asking "mar" when "par" would return, thus showing that the New Englanders' peculiar manner of adding and dropping r's was already present in the late eighteenth century.) This is a book for general readers only. Since it does not contain all the letters between the two Adamses during this period, scholars and others desiring the full correspondence need to consult the volumes of the *Adams Family Correspondence* published by Harvard University Press.

For some of the Founders and their wives, we have virtually no letters at all. After Washington's death, Martha destroyed nearly all the correspondence between her and George, and Jefferson did likewise with the letters between himself and his wife. Even if we had such letters, it is hard to imagine that they would resemble those between John and Abigail Adams. Their correspondence has an openness and a candor and a thoughtful character that could come only from two people who regarded each other as intellectual comrades. Their correspondence, as John pointed out, was a conversation between "two friendly souls."

In their many letters they exchanged views on everything from the politics of the Continental Congress to the price of clover seed. "I want to sit down and converse with you, every evening," wrote Abigail, and she did. She told her husband about the local news of Braintree, her dinner guests, the local rumors, the weather, the state of their farm. Although Abigail had no formal education, she read widely and quoted from an extraordinary array of writers, often from memory: Dryden, Pope, William Collins, Edward Young, Shakespeare, Polybius, the Bible, and Charles Rollin's ancient history, among others. No issue was too small or too large for her comment. She had strong views about everything, including politics; indeed, she was, as the Federalist Fisher Ames once observed, "as complete a politician as any lady in the old French Court."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND HIS wife Deborah were also separated for long periods of time; indeed, they were apart for fifteen of the last seventeen years of their marriage. They wrote to each other, but not at all as often as John and Abigail Adams did, and their correspondence was very different. Franklin's letters from London to Deborah in Philadelphia increasingly resemble those of a businessman to his overseas agent. They are rather cold and perfunctory, and contrast markedly with the warm and chatty letters that he exchanged with his sister Jane Mecom. Deborah was never Franklin's intellectual partner, and at the end he scarcely thought of her as his wife. She tried her best to accommo-

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date her celebrated husband. She usually signed herself as his "a feck shonet wife," and she continued to supply him with long, rambling, chaotically misspelled, and unpunctuated streams of thought about the everyday routines of her life in Philadelphia. Like many wives in that patriarchal age, Deborah's love of her husband was mingled with respect and even awe, doubly so because of Franklin's international fame. She hesitated to say "anything to you that will give you aney uneseynes" and feared constantly to do the smallest thing, "leste it shold not be write." Abigail Adams also respected her husband, but she never expressed this sort of obsequiousness.

Since Martha Washington burned nearly all the letters between her and her legendary husband, we do not know much about the intimacy of their relationship. As genial and practical as Martha was reported to be, she was certainly not intellectually sophisticated. Indeed, many of her letters written in her official capacity as Washington's wife were either dictated or actually written by someone else over her signature. It is questionable whether Martha ever fully shared her illustrious husband's goals and ambitions. She seems to have preferred that Washington stay home and manage Mount Vernon and provide for his family rather than engage in his public activities. Washington did not always confide his plans to her. He knew she did not favor his becoming commander of the Continental Army, and he was very reluctant to tell her that he had accepted the presidency of the United States. In his will he freed his slaves effective upon Martha's death, though she and her family bitterly opposed it; during his final retirement the couple apparently had even stopped talking to each other about slavery, so sensitive had the subject become.

But one cannot imagine John and Abigail Adams not sharing their opinions about such matters. Indeed, as early as 1774 Abigail reminded John that slavery had "always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me—to fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have. You know my mind on this subject." It is Abigail's outspokenness on subjects such as slavery that most distinguishes the Adamses' marriage from those of the other Founders, and indeed from those of most eighteenth-century couples.

ABIGAIL WAS A WOMAN OF SUCH wit, passion, and volubility—expressing her views about everything from education to forms of government—that inevitably she and her spirited letters have bred what the historian Edith B. Gelles has called "the Abigail Industry." Every generation of Americans has read into the Adamses' marriage, and into Abigail's role in it, whatever the times seemed to require. During the past generation the times required a marriage of equals and a spokeswoman for feminism and women's rights, and the Adamses' marriage and Abigail seemed ideally to fit the bill. In 1975, Elizabeth Evans called Abigail Adams "the most famous advocate of women's rights" in the Revolutionary era. The distinguished historian Richard B. Morris agreed. "Abigail, a committed feminist," he had written a few years earlier, "often baited her husband about the undue submission of women at the law and in education." Even Frank Shuffelton in this volume describes Abigail as "someone who deservedly has become an icon for American feminists and champions of women's rights."

In her now famous letter to John written on March 31, 1776, Abigail suggested to her husband, who was busy in Philadelphia thinking about declaring independence and constitution-making, that he

> remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.

This passage was quoted over and over and used as the opening document in a variety of feminist collections in the 1970s and 1980s. "Remember the ladies" became a watchword for many in the feminist movement.

But now things are somewhat different. A generation later, we possess a much more contextualized and historical understanding of Abigail's remarks, and

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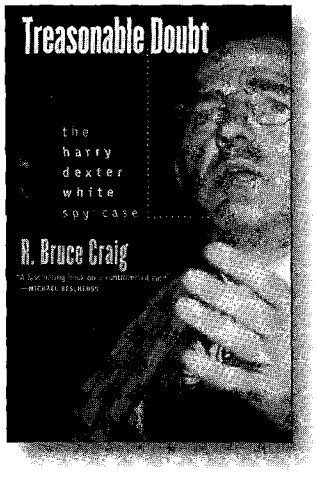

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the famous passage has lost some, but not all, of its earlier sting. Even today some tone-deaf historians still strain to read into it more significance than Abigail's relationship with her world will bear. Abigail was not a modern feminist.

She had wit and humor and, proud of her sauciness, loved to tease and to banter with her husband, which is what she was doing in this famous letter. She kidded him about many things, including his being a big-shot delegate at the Continental Congress. At one point she suggested that their Braintree cows, suffering from drought, ought to petition the Congress, setting forth their grievances and their deprivations of ancient privileges that ought to be restored to them. She even joked with him about lawyers. Her "remember the ladies" statement was another example of her teasing. In making it, Abigail was not fundamentally challenging either her domestic situation or the role of women in her society.

Teasing, of course, can often make a serious point, and in her mischievous remarks Abigail was certainly expressing a self-conscious awareness of the legally dependent and inferior position of women—a provocative awareness that other women would soon develop and expand, but that Abigail herself did not. As Gelles has pointed out in a series of important books and articles, Abigail Adams did not seriously question the place of women in her society. Although she did want women to be as well educated as men (itself a bold proposal), she was fully content with her domestic role as wife and mother. What she most disliked was having to act as head of the household in John's absence. As Gelles observes, "she regarded her role [as head of the household] as unnatural, a patriotic sacrifice." Although Abigail eventually became proud of her success as a manager of the family farm, she wanted nothing more than to have her husband back so she could resume what she thought of as her rightful role as wife and mother. To conceive of Abigail as somehow yearning to be like her husband is not only anachronistic, it is also trivializing and demeaning of her domestic character—as if the male model of political activity were the only standard of worth.

The Adamses were an unusual couple, and Abigail was certainly the brightest and the most learned of the Founders' wives. But the Adamses were products of their time, not ours, and we do ourselves no favor by ripping them out of the century in which they lived. To recover their time and their place, with all the immediacy and the contingency of events whose future significance the participants could not know, there is no better place to start than with these genuinely extraordinary letters. ■

Michael André Bernstein

Dynasty

CELESTIAL HARMONIES: A NOVEL
By Péter Esterházy
Translated by Judith Sollosy
(HarperCollins, 846 pp., $29.95)

ALTHOUGH ADMITTING AS much would be profoundly uncongenial to most of those who practice it, the countries of the former Soviet Empire offer an exemplary testing ground for what academia has come to call "postcolonial studies," and nowhere is this more evident than in the problematic relationship of resistance and collaboration between the security apparatus of a totalitarian state and its captive citizens. Almost monthly, recently opened archives from Eastern Europe force us to revise old assumptions about who was co-opted into spying on his fellows and who refused, and the boundary lines between venality, cowardice, and heroism are blurring at an uncomfortable pace. At the very least, we are learning that erecting a monument to a supposed opponent of a tyrannical regime is a risky undertaking.

Péter Esterházy's massive novel seeks to be many things, but central among them is a prose celebration of his father Mátyás, who, in his son's account, endured physical coercion, social ostracism, internal exile, and desperate poverty as a consequence of his aristocratic birth and his principled refusal to have anything to do with the Stalinist thugs who governed his country for four decades after World War II. But in January, 2000, when the book was all but complete, Esterházy's long-standing request for access to the former Communist regime's secret police files about his family was granted. Rather than the dossier of a persecuted hero, what Péter received was a set of yellowed folders in which he immediately recognized his father's handwriting. It was clear that from 1957 until 1980, under the pseudonym "Csanadi," Mátyás Esterházy had served the notorious "Section III/III" of the Hungarian secret police as a regular informer.

If the personal shock to Esterházy was unimaginable, the consequences for *Celestial Harmonies*, his intended magnum opus, were potentially lethal. The book went on to be crowned with all the glittering honors, including the Hungarian Literature Prize and the Sándor Márai Prize in his own country, as well as the Premio Circeo in Italy and the Herder Prize in Germany. Critics throughout Europe—especially in Germany, where the book was translated to nearly unanimous acclaim—vied with one another in finding superlatives to signal their admiration.

It is perhaps ungracious to suppose that a certain element of snobbery may have helped to shape these effusions, but it is impossible not to notice how many critics opened their accounts with a lengthy, awestruck recitation of the Esterházy family's former grandeur as one of the Hapsburg Empire's most imposing aristocratic dynasties, renowned for its wealth, political influence, and patronage of the arts. The marketing of imperial nostalgia shows no sign of diminishing, and *Celestial Harmonies* has the singular advantage of simultaneously mobilizing that nostalgia while seeming to distance itself from its most obvious conventions by a determinedly postmodern armature. The text's uninviting length and—at least for the first half—its willful plotlessness ensure that Esterházy's readers, without ever jeopardizing their superiority to the glamour-seeking fantasies of mass culture, could give themselves up to a fascination not necessarily so different from the one that propels tourists to visit Schönbrunn and Bad

Michael André Bernstein's novel CONSPIRATORS *has just been published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.*

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Ischl in greater numbers every year.

But what to do about the revelations in the secret dossiers that directly contradicted the image of Mátyás, painstakingly constructed over more than four hundred pages in Part Two of *Celestial Harmonies*? Esterházy, it seems to me, did the one natural and straightforward thing a writer could do: he composed a new work about his crisis. In the so-called "Corrected Edition" (*Verbesserte Ausgabe* is actually the title of the German translation), he reprints numerous passages from his father's spy reports and confronts Mátyás's long-concealed collaboration without evasion or excuse, but also without renouncing his love for a man who, no matter what has come to light, survives in his memory as the father whom he admired and cherished as a boy.

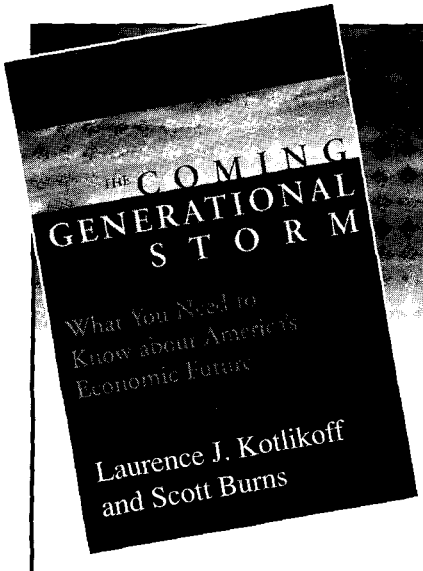
It is an older, more vulnerable, and chastened author we hear in the new account; and if he sacrifices most of the literary gamesmanship and stylistic flourishes of the earlier book, the corresponding gain in emotional directness is more than ample compensation. It is hard to fathom why Esterházy's American publisher was unwilling to wait and give us both books together, the original *Celestial Harmonies* and its revisionary successor. The two works, locked as they are in a melancholy dialogue, now constitute aspects of a single project. Their cumulative effect is far greater than that of *Celestial Harmonies* alone, even without the historical disclosures that, at this juncture, make publishing the first book on its own a questionable decision.

"It is deucedly difficult to tell a lie when you don't know the truth" is the work's inaugural sentence. Or, it is now hard to avoid reflecting, to tell the truth until one has come to recognize what is a lie.

LITERATURE, LIKE HISTORY, HAS its own uncanny turnings, and even read strictly by itself, without any further knowledge about Mátyás, this novel is a curiously self-divided book. This is deliberately so in one sense, since it is made up of two radically different sections, the first comprising 371 chronological "Numbered Sentences from the Lives of the Esterházy Family," while the second, titled "Confessions of an Esterházy Family," traces a roughly continuous account of the family from the brief Communist takeover led by Béla Kun in 1919 up to the early 1980s.

The "numbered sentences," ranging in length from a single phrase to several pages, are Esterházy's way of dismantling the expectations of a conventional family history. The sentences encompass virtually every literary genre: epigram, anecdote, chronicle, memoir, legend, and vignette follow upon one another with no greater principle of inner relationship or sequence than the purely abstract rule of numerical succession. And just as the text refuses any stable chronological unfolding, so it also dispenses with proper names for the family members. Most of the entries (calling them sentences is really a misnomer) are anchored by the repeated phrase "here my father's name follows" as one Esterházy is distinguished from another solely by his interests, habits of mind and temperament, and, quite often, favorite possessions.

A secondary strand, announced by variations on the formula "which is how my father and my mother met," is the necessary complement to the first, since



The Coming Generational Storm

What You Need to Know About America's Economic Future

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it signals the continuation of the line and ensures that the title of father has been added to all the others held by successive Esterházys. If Donald Barthelme had written an upscale *Buddenbrooks*, it might look something like Part One of *Celestial Harmonies*. And yet, for all its now somewhat dated postmodern gambits, this formal organization is also profoundly consonant with the oldest aristocratic notion of family identity. All the Esterházys, such a narrative strategy implies, are part of a single, quasi-mythical unity, stretching back to the beginning of time, with each bearer of the name holding it not as his personal possession, but merely on loan until his successor comes to assume it in turn.

By refusing the temporal unfolding of a single, unified story, with its implicit assertion of comprehensibility and finitude, the "numbered sentences" seek a textual equivalent of the idea that for a family as ancient and as chronicled as the Esterházys, no single individual can ever embody fully the identity crystallized in the name. Just as the numbered sentences are not governed by chronology, so the family, in its extensiveness, escapes the reckoning of any normal human time frame. There are innumerable fathers stretching back in a continuous, unbroken line from the Middle Ages to the present. All that counts is that each is an Esterházy and the father of an Esterházy. Not until we are nearly at the end of the whole section, in "sentence 337," do we encounter the originating principle out of which the catalogue is generated: "My father asked his children to give a sentence about their father. Specifically, if they had to give a sentence (word, story), what would it be?"

WHAT THIS PRINCIPLE LACKS, of course, is any way of distinguishing the interesting from the banal. If it happened to an Esterházy, or could be imagined as having happened to an Esterházy, or pertains to the Esterházys in any way, it is by definition worthy of being included. But apparently even so hospitable a rule is not capacious enough, since Péter also cites famous literary or historical "sentences" that have no relationship at all to his family. Number 152, for example, reads in its entirety: "My father, the man without qualities, slept with his older sister. Fuck it/him/her." Others are even more direct in their "sampling" and include quotations such as this one from *Ulysses*: "or the grilled mutton kidneys which gave his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine." I suppose there must be readers to whom throwaway references to Musil and Joyce seem wittily "intertextual." For them, *Celestial Harmonies* will prove an endless delight, since it is full of allusions to and borrowings from famous authors, a partial list of whom Esterházy has been thoughtful enough to provide at the book's end.

Celestial Harmonies, that is, absorbs other people's sentences the way the Esterházys once absorbed other people's palaces and farmlands, and although in theory such allusiveness has the potential to be amusing, here it frequently feels thematically and tonally inept. Whether the problem is the translator's or lies in Esterházy's own style, the handling of tonal registers is often gratingly maladroit. The urge to mix the mandarin and the demotic is one of postmodernism's most familiar moves, but to be effective it requires more than labored humor such as "Bartók. Blame it on Bartók. Or the bossanova." To shift rapidly among different kinds of speech demands a particularly fine ear, and phrases such as "aristocrats are just a wee bit less nationalistic and anti-Semitic than the common folk, not because they're any hootin' superior to them, or more level-headed, possibly even more circumspect, that's not why," bear witness, at least in the English rendering, to an astonishing tone-deafness. To throw "wee bit," "hootin'," and "circumspect" into the same sentence without any context that makes sense of the leaps in lexical registers is not really writing, but simply flailing at words.

But at least Esterházy's sampling of other writers is openly acknowledged. More problematic is his appropriation of historical experiences that never formed part of the family's fate. In several vignettes, "my father" is described as having been deported to a Nazi concentration camp. A sentence like number 213 succeeds in combining both types of tone-deafness, the thematic and the verbal:

> They dragged my daddy off to Mauthausen where, along with everyone else, they killed him. When he returned, he weighed forty kilos. He cried a lot, and his skin, which had turned a repulsive gray, was covered with festering sores that took forever to heal.... Then in 1945, when barely eighteen, he joined the Communist Party, because he wanted to break the silence. But this didn't work out either, and he got involved in some shady affairs and was locked up, but then around '56, he was released, and then everything was back to normal, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse.

Almost everything about this passage strikes the wrong note, and the fact that on the preceding page the father is described as "one of the Milice big shots in the Vichy government" does nothing to lessen the problem. Indeed, such linkages are indispensable to Esterházy's larger, if never directly acknowledged, assumption, which is that since his family and Hungary are essentially identical, whatever happened to any Hungarian anywhere can be formulated legitimately as one of the "sentences from the lives of the Esterházy family."

So grandiose a dynastic fantasy can be imaginatively compelling. Think, for example, of how much emotional power Lampedusa's *The Leopard* derives from its identification of the princely Salina family with a historical Sicily that is passing into oblivion during the book's unfolding. *Celestial Harmonies* is not vitiated by its excesses, but rather by a certain failure of nerve that prevents Esterházy from finding a tone and a form consonant with his purpose, and in the end this makes him settle for a perfectly prizeworthy piece of fashionable high literature instead of the more eccentrically ambitious book it might have been.

WHAT MAKES THE BOOK'S weakness a matter of regret is that, at its best, Esterházy's perspective can yield genuinely effective results, especially when it is the nature of fatherhood that engages him. Near the beginning, he writes that "my father must not be spoken of. To speak well of him almost always amounts to flattery. To speak ill of him is fraught with danger if he is alive, while it is an act of cowardice if he is dead." Esterházy knows how such a realization threatens to undermine the legitimacy of his entire project, and the finest passages wrestle with the universal dilemma of writing the book of the fathers so that it can be more than either filial rebellion or filial flattery. Esterházy invokes the ancient, quasi-theological link between father and divine creator, treating both terms as fundamental mys-

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teries that ground language as well as existence itself:

> Why must my father be a noun? Why not a verb—the most active and dynamic of all? Hasn't the naming of my father as a noun been an act of annihilating that dynamic verb? ... My father once answered a question saying, I am that I am.... There could, however, be an interpretation that would start with us conceiving of the verb "to be" with relation to my father in the future tense. In which case, my father's words would be as follows: I am that I will affirm myself to be. In short, the question, who is my father, is open. Time and time again, my father will affirm himself.

In a sense, Part Two of *Celestial Harmonies* is Mátyás Esterházy's self-affirmation as seen through the eyes of his devoted son. After more than a century of autobiographically based fictions such as *Sons and Lovers*, *Ulysses*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*, in which the child's overwhelming conviction of personal entitlement prominently includes passing judgment upon an unworthy father, there is something welcome in seeing filial piety restored to a foundational position in a serious book.

The focus on Péter Esterházy's own situation forces a marked sharpening of emotional attention, and his language becomes correspondingly more direct, so that the historical as well as the personal details are much more persuasively rendered. Mátyás was born to unimaginable wealth and position in 1919, but by 1948 the family had lost everything and had become an object of loathing and spite to the country's new masters. Much of the section is written in a straightforward first-person voice, and Esterházy employs it to give a convincing account of what it feels like to be regarded as a "class enemy" when one is simply an adolescent struggling to get along at school and become a good soccer player. "We had this intensely Communist vice principal, Mrs. Váradi, who practiced the class struggle on the two of us, my younger brother and me." Although the sections are still numbered, they now follow a chronological progression, and individual sentences often have the kind of grim humor that was lacking in Part One in spite of the labored effort to achieve it.

For my taste, Esterházy quotes a few too many passages in his grandparents' and parents' voices about the perniciousness of Jews as shameless vulgarians or bloody-minded Bolshevik levelers, but he is almost certainly accurate in his ventriloquism. In his own voice, except for bullies such as Mrs. Váradi or the nameless authorities who would not permit his father to go to the grandfather's funeral in Vienna because "it would be against State interests," he is notably uninterested in questions of blame. Instead, the story is suspended over the abyss between everything (what the family owned at Mátyás's birth) and nothing (its possessions at the book's end).

Even after World War I and the collapse of the Hapsburg empire, the family still "had so much that they had every reason to think they couldn't lose it all, for everything can't be lost, only a lot." The Communist seizure of power showed how foolish that belief was, and within a short time the Esterházys owned nothing except a name that identified them as embodiments of the class that the new regime had come to eradicate. Now, instead of the interchangeable catalogue of Esterházys that made up the first part of the book, the family name and destiny is embodied in one unique and absolutely individualized man.

Mátyás is a volcanic figure, given to drink and depression, but with an unquenchable vitality. Despite his excesses, or, more accurately, because of them, his father appeared to Péter as a larger-than-life heroic figure: "My father was not a revolutionary, just a great soul searching for the meaning of life, specifically, the meaning of his life, and even more specifically, the nature of freedom." Exiled from Budapest in 1951 and forced from one menial job to another, at the book's end Mátyás is finally allowed to return to the capital and granted a position as a translator, a reprieve from enforced physical labor that only leaves him more bereft than ever, reduced to pounding out others' sentences on his typewriter. In the last scene, he is sitting despondently at his desk wrestling with the question of what the word "homeland" could still mean after everything the country has endured. Here the identification of individual and nation is powerfully rendered, and for the reader the fact that the person in question has a heraldic ancestry is scarcely relevant anymore.

But to the Esterházys themselves, as well as to their Communist adversaries, that fact can never be anything but all-important. Péter tells a revealing story about making squeamish faces on an overcrowded bus when someone asked him who he thought he was, Prince Esterházy? In reply, he shoved his newly issued ID card under the man's nose and watched him fall silent. "In those days," Péter writes, "when asked if I was related, I said no, I'm not related, I am *them*." It is a conviction that today only a true Marxist and an aristocrat still embrace, and when Péter gets into an argument with an illiterate school bully, he is told, "You're not just you, you're all of you! You're the whole family, and not just the ones living now, but the dukes and princes, too. The whole lot!" To put his family's own deepest assumptions into the mouth of a hooligan is a wonderful touch, and it shows a deftness that is almost worthy of a Lampedusa.

"The bigger a family, the better it knows itself" is one of the governing assumptions of this book. Perhaps so, but not without more complications than the Péter Esterházy of *Celestial Harmonies* lets himself imagine. And yet the very logic of the book's portrait of Mátyás already contains the basis for all the later revelations. If one takes seriously the notion of Mátyás as the embodiment of a captive Hungary, then the darker possibilities implicit in that representation need to be taken into account as well. Indeed, perhaps it is only because he was a collaborator and a police spy, as well as a vocal despiser of the regime, that Mátyás can be regarded as incarnating his people's fate in all its vicissitudes. Nothing Mátyás did makes him alien either to his country's or his family's traditions. Read alongside the "Corrected Edition," *Celestial Harmonies* becomes a haunting tale of filial love and the pain of subsequent disillusionment. An adult's book, in other words. On its own, though, for all its local strengths, it is much less than that. ■

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BALTIMORE DIARIST

Sunday!

ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE, a Monster Truck rally is about the smell. Long before Bigfoot and Grave Digger hit the arena floor, the scent of racing fuel seeps up through the stands. Suffused with sulfur, it has an odor akin to rotten eggs—though die-hard fans will tell you it's better than roses. By the end of the rally, exhaust fumes hover over the crowds like cumulus clouds, giving everyone a slight headache.

THEN THERE'S THE OVERPOWERING, high-pitched noise of the trucks themselves. Imagine a dental drill held up to a microphone. Next, add a tuba for counterpoint. Now imagine that sound in stereo, as two or more trucks often appear at the same time. If you forgot to bring earplugs, you could lose your hearing. The piercing roar sends an inexplicable twinge of fear through your lower chest; sitting there, it's easy to understand why dive-bomber pilots used to attach whistles to their planes' wings. Suddenly, you're not in a sports arena, but along the Western Front. Welcome to America, where thousands of people pay $20 to get high on fuel exhaust and tempt shell shock, all to watch outsized trucks demolish late-model sedans.

I GREW UP IN NASHVILLE, AND PRACtically every other month one of several itinerant Monster Truck tours would invade our local fairgrounds. It was, for a still-slumbering town like Nashville circa 1987, a big deal. But, for some reason, despite the incessant Saturday-morning ads reminding me that on *Sunday! Sunday! Sunday!* my city would be overrun by the likes of Black Stallion, Reptoid, and Godzilla, I never made it to a rally. So, when a friend called recently to tell me the Monster Jam Series 2004 was coming to Baltimore's 1st Mariner Arena and asked if I wanted to go, I didn't think twice.

AT A TYPICAL RALLY, EIGHT TRUCKS will compete in two events. At our rally, this meant a sort of long jump followed by a "freestyle," in which trucks received points for how creatively they could destroy a pile of cars. That night, the trucks included Little Tiger, Eradicator, and Grave Digger, the reigning king of the Monster Truck world and the center of its marketing offensive. (For an extra $20, fans could buy plastic boomerangs complete with Grave Digger "flame stripes.") An emcee gave a running profile of each truck—where it was built, which rallies it had won. (As in horseracing, the vehicles far outshine their drivers, who come across as little more than appendages to the machines that carry them to victory.) There's not much precision to the competition—it was never clear to me, for instance, whether the long jump was judged by hang time or distance or height. But, then, a Monster Truck rally isn't really a competition. It's a celebration. It's pure fantasy, the annihilation of the everyday—in this case, old Fords and Chevys—by overpowering technology.

THE FRIEND WHO INVITED ME, JOHN, is a political science graduate student at Johns Hopkins and an Irish national. Which means that, like many Europeans living in the United States, he is also an anthropologist of Americana. He has seen the world's largest ball of twine, and he has eaten turducken. He has made the pilgrimage to Graceland. But, until recently, he'd yet to attend a Monster Truck rally. Along with us came two German exchange students from John's program who, like him, had seen Monster Trucks on cable television as children and were eager to experience the real thing.

THEY LOVED IT. THEY LOVED IT FOR the smells and the noise and the destruction. They loved it for the supersized nature of everything in the arena, from the two-pint cups of beer to the overweight fans to the tons of dirt that had been spread over the arena floor, which the trucks kicked up in mighty sprays each time they jumped a ramp. They loved the oddly sexual undertones of it all, like the emcee's repeated promise that the trucks could "go full throttle all night long." They loved it for the pro-wrestling faux-dramas that the promoters inserted between events—such as an ongoing tête-à-tête between the emcee and "Hot Rod," an impish redneck who rode around the arena in a garishly painted pint-sized truck of his own. But, above all else, they loved it for what it said to them about America. The rally was concentrated red state, the kind of experience you can't get from grad-student seminars or Ph.D. dissertations. "Monster Truck rallies," John told me later, "account for a thousandth of a percent of what Europeans get of American culture, yet I think we had a suspicion that this is where America's heart is, that these are the Americans who count, who vote, and on whose behalf the country is directed."

THE RALLY, HE SAID, WAS ABOUT waste—and waste of a sort that only Americans could conceive of. The narrow version of the American Dream is no longer unique to America: You can live in the suburbs and eat at McDonald's not only in Dublin or Berlin, but in Mumbai or Guangzhou. But the larger promise of America—that there is so much of everything that we can spend it and waste it and destroy it for our own amusement—is still alien to most of the world. This is particularly true in Europe, where the ups and downs of the twentieth century taught that stability, prudence, and conservation are to be valued above all. No wonder my friends loved it.

THAT NIGHT IN BALTIMORE WAS AN exercise in what the rest of the world would likely deem a parody of this country's excessiveness. And yet it seemed, as we left the arena, that the crowd had taken in everything they saw without a single grain of salt. Which didn't mean they thought a real competition had just taken place—far from it. Rather, they took it in because, like John and Co., they loved what the Monster Trucks told them about America. But, in their case, it communicated not excess, but strength, transmitted in its most tactile, overpowering form. Maybe they were just high on exhaust fumes, but it seemed that for them—and millions of other Monster Truck fans—as long as Grave Digger reigns supreme, America would be all right.

CLAY RISEN

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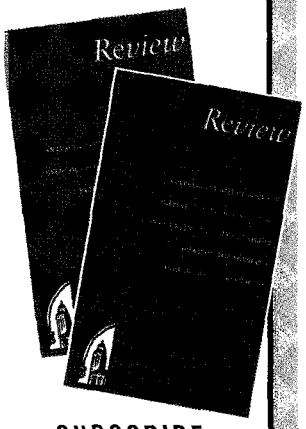

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Power and Population in Asia

Aging Asia: an uneven burden?

Between 2000 and 2025 China's median age is set to rise very substantially: from about 30 to around 39. According to UNPD projections for 2025, in fact, China's median age will be higher than America's. The impending tempo of population aging in China is very nearly as rapid as anything history has yet seen. It will be far faster than what was recorded in the more developed regions over the past three decades and is exceeded only by Japan. There is a crucial difference, however, between Japan's recent past and China's prospective future. To put the matter bluntly, **Japan became rich before it became old; China will do things the other way around**. When Japan had the same proportion of population 65 and older as does China today (2000), its level of per capita output was three times higher than China's is now. In 2025, 13.4 percent of China's population is projected to be 65-plus; when Japan crossed the 13.4 percent threshold, its per capita GDP was approaching $20,000 a year (constant 1990 PPP dollars). One need not be a "Sino-pessimist" to suggest that China will be nowhere near that same economic marker 22 years from now.

—Nicholas Eberstadt

Burgers, Fries, and Lawyers

Why is fast food under attack?

He squeezes a Cubs pennant in his left hand while shoving a mustard-smeared hot dog into his mouth with the right. The Dodgers have a runner on first, who is sneaking a big lead off the base. The Cubs' pitcher has thrown three balls and two strikes to the batter, a notorious power hitter. The obese fan holds his breath while the pitcher winds up and fires a blazing fastball. "Crack!" The ball flies over the fan's head into the bleachers for a game-winning home run. **The fan slumps to his bleacher seat and has a heart attack. Whom should the fan sue?** (a) The Cubs for breaking his heart? (b) The hot dog company for making a fatty food? (c) The hot dog vendor for selling him a fatty food? (d) All of the above

—Todd G. Buchholz

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